


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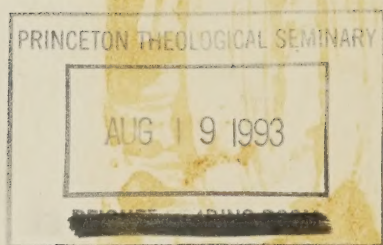
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a theological prospectus

for the **Campus Ministry**

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A SYMPOSIUM BY  PRESBYTERIAN UNIVERSITY PASTORS



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PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

A SYMPOSIUM BY PRESBYTERIAN UNIVERSITY PASTORS

prepared by

The Department of Campus Christian Life
Board of Christian Education, Presbyterian Church, U. S.
Richmond, Virginia

and

The Department of Campus Christian Life
Board of Christian Education, United Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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preface

This symposium is presented by the Campus Christian Life Departments of the two Presbyterian Churches, not as a finished product, but as a serious searching for answers to vital questions confronting Christian workers on the campuses of American colleges and universities.

The twelve chapters are not final statements of theology or of Christian strategy but rather are in the nature of dialogues in which a campus pastor discusses the ideas and questions which have flooded upon him as he meets with students and professors. No author professes to be an authority in theology or to have final statements of the Christian faith. Each chapter is written in the expectation that through the dialectic with other campus workers the meaning of the Christian faith may become clearer and ways may be discovered for a more effective campus ministry. Perhaps a different kind of book and a more finished product would have been developed if there had been opportunity for closer collaboration between the writers and if the book had been subjected to a process of thorough editing and revision, but this procedure probably would have obscured the individual, searching inquiry of the authors.

The eleven authors are Presbyterian workers on campuses in the East and West, the North and South, and it is apparent from what they have written that the American campus is essentially the same wherever it is located.

The Presbyterian Campus Christian Life Departments are gratified to see so clearly that their campus workers today are not concerned with trivialities but that the Christian faith in all its vitality is taken seriously. The Bible is studied as the word of God; the Church is the Covenant Community of God's people; the gospel is God's message of redemption from sin; and Jesus Christ is Lord and Saviour.

Although this work has been a cooperative endeavor between those at work in the university ministry and the Departments of Campus Christian Life of both Presbyterian Churches, one person more than any other was responsible for the idea behind the project and its inception. Therefore, the editorial committee would like to express sincere appreciation to the Reverend Walter W. Wiest, associate professor of systematic theology, Western Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh. It was under Mr. Wiest's leadership in the study area of the Department of

Campus Christian Life of the then Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., that this work was first envisioned and initiated. Without his vision, experience, and keen insight into the problems dealt with herein, the nature and scope of this work would not be as comprehensive as we trust it is.

JOINT EDITORIAL COMMITTEE
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The following chapters comprise an examination of some of the major teachings of the Christian Church approached from the perspective of men and women engaged professionally in the campus ministry. The authors would all, with due humility, disavow the title of "theologian"—in its American but not Germanic sense. Yet all of them write from the background of some years of formal study in theology, further years of reading in that field, and practical involvement in the campus ministry. The results form what is called *A Basis for Study*, or to give it its somewhat pretentious subtitle, "A Theological Prospectus for the Campus Ministry."

Toward a Theology of Campus Christian Life

That Campus Christian Life has a theological prospectus or basis is not new. The Church's mode of ministry in any context always presumes a theology of some sort. But sometimes this theology has not been consciously thought through or clearly formulated. Even more frequently it has reflected the social attitudes of the world around it rather than standing firm on what we have learned to call, in modern theological parlance, the *kerygma*. But today a theology of Campus Christian Life is in the process of being formulated, not just in seminaries or in national denominational offices, but on the campuses of colleges and universities across the nation.

General Theological Renaissance

One of the reasons for this grass-roots wrestling with theology is the impact of the scholarly work done in the realm of Bible studies during the last half century. The impact of this critical work, with the resultant development of what is called "biblical theology,"¹ has had a wholesome effect on the life of the Church, especially in the area of its concern for higher education. Particularly within the professional circles of the various fellowships of the campus ministry has the impact of biblical studies been the occasion for a radical review and rethinking of the nature of the Church's ministry in the university. No longer in these

¹ "Biblical theology" is a somewhat confusing term. Who has ever heard of a churchman propounding what he called a "nonbiblical theology"?

professional meetings do we find university pastors debating as to the most efficacious color for mimeographed announcements or the critical issue of whether students in campus Christian fellowships ought to carry membership cards! These professional staff meetings now tend to center around some aspect of the Christ-culture problem, dealing with the relationship that obtains or should obtain between the Church and the World in such areas as higher education, politics, and economics. To discuss such problems meaningfully as Christians requires the formulation of a carefully delineated and relevant theology.

World Perspective

Another factor that has made for a renaissance in theological thinking among those engaged in Campus Christian Life is the experience which has come into our university world from the World's Student Christian Federation. This organization and its American branch, the United Student Christian Council, have provided a world-wide perspective on the Church's life and mission. The more theologically aware and mature Student Christian Movements of the older churches of Europe and the younger churches of Asia and Africa have made American students, faculty, and university workers aware, painfully at times, of the necessity for clear theological reasoning and a solid biblical undergirding.

Life and Mission Emphasis

Dr. Visser't Hooft of the World Council recently claimed that for the first time since the Reformation the Protestant Churches have a common understanding of the relation of theology and mission which places mission at the heart of the Church's life. The impact of this development is at the present time being carried to the campuses of our nation and around the world by the Life and Mission emphasis of the World's Student Christian Federation. It is hoped that a renewal of the student Christian movements and the churches may take place through the study, prayers, and dynamic of this emphasis.

Maturing Leadership

But none of these factors—the development of biblical theology, the professional meetings of campus Christian workers, or the contributions of the World's Student Christian Federation—could have produced the present ferment in theological concern for the Church's mission in the university had it not been for the leadership given to the Church and its university ministry at this critical time. This leadership—student, faculty, professional staff (national and local)—is wrestling with the "crisis in the university" in the light of the Church's responsibility in higher education. Such wrestling has so far produced no one startling or universal answer to the problem of how the Church is to be related to the university so as to do justice to the particular genius of each insti-

tution. But it has been fruitful in opening up an encounter between Church and university, the outcome of which may be revolutionary and redemptive for both!

It is within this encounter between Christ and culture—the Church and the university world—that these chapters may have a place as they seek to set forward some of the central tenets of the Christian faith within the context of the contemporary American university scene. As such they hopefully provide “a basis for study” for those in Campus Christian Life. For unless the issues dealt with here are studied by university people—undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and university pastors—the opportunities presented by the theological renaissance we have already mentioned and the peculiar contemporary openness of the university to the Church noted by many may be lost.

Why Study Groups?

Thus far we have given some of the factors which have played into the present life of the Church's ministry in higher education with its theological grapplings and missionary awareness. But what *is* the place of study in the “program” of the campus Christian fellowship? The study groups or “non-credit courses” offered in most campus centers are, with some notable exceptions, weak links in what is regarded as the “program.” But if students, faculty, and professional staff workers are not engaged in serious study, we must yield to the criticism that our campus ministry is a “cookie-and-doughnut-pushing program”—a soporific designed to “save students for the Church by saving them from an education!”

Making Up for Sunday School

There are many reasons given for the existence of study groups in campus Christian fellowships. Some are better than others. The failure of many of these study groups is due, at least in part, to the inadequacy of many of the reasons put forward for them. If university pastors were asked why study groups were needed, the first answer many would give would probably be, “To overcome students' incredible ignorance of the Christian faith.” Many study programs are therefore designed to make up for what was or was not studied in Sunday church school. The argument goes with seeming logic that before any encounter between Christian faith and the problems of our age is possible, something of the Christian faith must be known. Classes in Bible study and basic Christian doctrines attempt to equip students with an understanding of their faith. Yet there is generally little response to a study of the Bible or Christian doctrine *per se*. This is because they seem unrelated to the real life of the students. Such study frequently provides answers to unasked questions, than which there is nothing more futile, as Reinhold Niebuhr has observed. Even those who can be persuaded or shamed into

taking such courses frequently do not find them significant—they never “come alive” in the New Testament sense. It is just not possible to learn about the faith when the world is left out. We must remember that God did not so love *doctrine*, but he “so loved the *world*”!

The Sophisticated Approach

Other study programs do not find their center in the elementary task of basic Christian education, but take the offensive and set out to challenge the autonomy and pretensions of the secular university. The aim here is to train a few intellectual shock troops to launch a telling attack on the key positions of university life. An elite corps is equipped with the full armament of, say, the three B's (Barth, Brunner, and Bultmann) at infinite expenditure of the university pastor's time, patience, and intelligence. The idea here is to provide a coherent and articulate theology supremely aware of the secular world (but only in intellectual and European terms) in order that a victorious assault might be made upon the university. Frequently the elite corps of Christians becomes an exclusive band of dilettantes, too wrapped up in the “right” theological questions to deal with their less sophisticated Christian brethren, let alone the non-Christian students who just don't match up with what the world is supposed to be! Then what began as an intellectual offensive on the university degenerates into barracks-room warfare between the various theological schools at the campus center.

Involvement and Witness

The context for study which seems to offer the best hope for a genuine encounter between Christ and culture, Church and university, faith and reason, is the reawakened sense of the Church's mission within every aspect of human culture. What is stressed is not study *first*, or study *together* with an intellectual understanding of the university and *then* outreach, but *involvement* and *witness* in the real life of the specific university or college. The Christian community is coming to a new understanding of itself as the people of God called together in obedience to the gospel within the university. This obedience is primarily an intellectual one, at least in this place and at this stage for many. The role of the Christian student and faculty member here is to know the real university, the one in which he is involved, and then, in the words of Dr. Arthur McKay, president of McCormick Theological Seminary, to “bolster the university in precisely those areas where its life (principally its academic life) is most threatened.” This may not be an easy or popular task, bringing the acclaim of fellow churchmen or academicians. For it implies, as Dr. McKay has observed, that Christians should become academic gadflies on the administrative rump or other more sensitive parts of the administrative anatomy. To do this effectively the Christian community must be actively involved in the total life of the uni-

versity, know where this life is most seriously threatened, and be willing to identify its efforts with concerned secularists in order to preserve the life of the university because God loves it and has purposes for it. Thus the university must be one of the most dynamic places where culture and Church meet. That they do meet rather than merely exist side by side, and that such meeting insures the integrity of both and is productive of a genuine dialectic—this is one of the tasks of study groups within the university.

Use of This Book

It is, therefore, one of the purposes of this book to stimulate such a dialogue within the university. This approach may help provide some balance and sense of direction here. In outlines it sketches some of the major areas of Christian life about which campus Christian groups should be concerned—not all of them in one year! Within each chapter the plan has been to suggest the sorts of specific issues or questions with which a group might try to deal and some way in which the issues might be opened up. At the end of the book a bibliography for chapters 2 through 12 is supplied for further reading and resource.

There has been no effort to produce a standardized theology or approach such as would be provided in a church school quarterly. No one can say exactly how a study program should develop in each center. Everything depends upon the ability of students, faculty, and staff to adapt ideas and suggestions to local needs and interests. What is offered will, it is hoped, be a guide and stimulus to the imagination as well as supply some resources and possible areas for discussion.

Some of the criteria which might be used for evaluating a study program and which grow out of the type of approach to study presented here are the following:

- 1) Has the study program been planned so that opportunity is given for groups to meet at various times and in a variety of places around different issues? Are the groups made up of undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty from the various disciplines and schools? Is the administrative staff of the college included?
- 2) While some lecturing may be necessary, do study groups give opportunity for discussion so that *dialogue* may take place? Is opportunity given for the various groups within the university to come together in an encounter cutting across professional and vocational lines? Are some specialized groups concerned with the relation between Christian faith and particular disciplines?
- 3) Does the study program make for an involvement of students in a genuine understanding of the specific university in which they live and work?
- 4) Does the study program produce some disagreement among the participants? For is it not true that the gospel is revolutionary and antithetical to many modern attitudes, so that it may well involve violent reaction and even rejection?
- 5) Do study groups contain not only the convinced or half-convinced but also some of those who stand outside or in opposition to the Christian faith?
- 6) Does what is being studied drive members of the group to a reading and grappling with the Bible? Unless it does so, it is not likely that any genuine

- renewal of the Student Christian Movement or the Church will occur.
- 7) Is the study group an outgrowth of an attempt to witness to the Christian faith in the university? Does it make possible a more articulate witness? If we believe that the Church's life is its mission, then all aspects of its life, worship, social concern, and study must help "equip the saints for the work of the ministry."

If the contents of this book were to be presented in a diagram, it would take the form of a wheel, with Christian faith or commitment at the center. Around the rim would be the study of the context of the Christian faith (doctrine), Christian ethics (including personal conduct and responsibility for others in society), resources for Christian living (prayer, worship, Christian life in church and fellowship), and our involvement in mission (evangelism and the world mission of the Church). All of this would be seen in the context of the setting of college and university life.

A study program could start anywhere within this diagram. After setting forth the "mood" of the contemporary student generation as the climate of the modern university, the book goes on to deal with basic Christian doctrine. Wherever we begin, we are always driven back to ask, "What, after all, is Christianity? What is our faith?" Study of this sort can never be separated, as we have said, from action and worship. To start with such questions as these may have the advantage of making clear the point of view from which everything else has been written.

It is the hope of the editor and authors that what is presented here may be of some assistance to university pastors, particularly those newly engaged in this specialized and demanding ministry; to the core of students who by experience, training, and commitment are charged with the responsibility of the life of the local student group; and to faculty discussion groups. It is also offered for the critical commentary of that growing group of men and women in the Church who share a deep concern for the campus ministry.

the situation: values and attitudes of American students | II

Commitment to Noncommitment

"I think there is no question that the vital core of this generation is engaged in a spiritual and intellectual temporizing action, essentially and broadly skeptical; it operates behind a mask of attentive compliance in order to preserve the pleasures it understands. It lives in a medium of low-pressure doubt which would be intolerable to anyone who had ever experienced the exhilaration of conviction."¹ So writes Professor R. J. Kaufmann of the English Department of the University of Rochester.

Is this an accurate picture of today's students—skeptical, unexcitedly pleasure-seeking, intellectually polite to their elders but uninvolved in intellectual struggle, uncommitted even in their doubts? Is it possible to give any general descriptions which stop short of the crudity of stereotypes? Let us proceed on the basis that some reasonably accurate pictures can be painted, cautioning ourselves at every turn that they do not describe *every* student, or any student *all* of the time.

Starting from a religious concern, one is tempted to analyze campus attitudes today in terms of the essentially "religious" categories of conviction, commitment, and worship. But such conviction, commitment, and worship seem largely absent in the tepid atmosphere of our campuses. It is the forces of nature and society which appear to evoke the most significant responses on the part of students. They are not so much worshiped as gods but treated as agencies which we can manipulate to bring forth a harmonious and pleasant existence for us and our fellows.

Some generations seem to have been involved in consuming passions and devotion to causes—science and scientific progress, social revolution and evolution toward justice and human welfare, defeat of totalitarian tyranny and building a new world order, free expression in the arts, to name a few. In their one-sidedness and their shortsightedness those passions and causes were very different from and fell far short of full-blown Christian faith. But those generations appear to have been actively involved and committed, while this generation seems paradoxically com-

¹ From the article "The Careful Young Men. Tomorrow's Leaders Analyzed by Today's Teachers," in *The Nation*, March 9, 1957, p. 210.

mitted only to noncommitment. The consuming passions and devoted causes of yesterday are subjected to rigorous and skeptical critiques. Their disillusionment, their frustration, and their datedness are clinically observed. The result is that their driving spiritual dynamic appears naive and quixotic. But, again paradoxically, today's students are almost universally described as more serious, more sober, harder working, and more businesslike than previous generations! In literature and the arts it is criticism which intrigues many of the best students. But criticism can be an alternative to committed action and involved appreciation, and it can, in turn, make both more difficult.

Are not this generation's deities after all only half-gods or demigods, enervated in their multiplicity, and treated with skepticism as to their ultimate significance? Surrounded by them, our generation works out its destiny. We are haunted, when we let ourselves be, by the gnawing suspicion that no gods have meaning, that we all may well be "screaming orphans in a cosmic echo chamber." But not even to this gnawing suspicion will we let ourselves be committed. One finds few committed "practicing" atheists in this generation of students.

Demigods of the Campus Pantheon

NATURE. Our demigods include the forces of nature, from human personality to the energy of the atom. This orientation to the natural world may take the form of a frequent if somewhat bored participation in the rites of sex, the taking of large or small doses of straight, biological, Kinseyesque, mechanized sex. Many a student would buy a dog, play a set of tennis, or write a limerick with a degree of involvement of the total person far more profound than the casualness with which he may enter the most total sex experience. Or the preoccupation with nature may take the form of the cult of adjustment, the fascination with the psychic life, the effort to come to terms with the mysterious glandular essence that is "what one really is." Only thus, the student has been led to believe, can one have an easy conscience, relaxed and quiet complexes, and disappearing neuroses.

Among the forces of nature stands the sinister power of nuclear energy, leashed or unleashed, devoted to weapons or to medicine and industry. There is a kind of fatalistic resignation on the part of many students in the face of this agency. We don't know where it is going or what it has in store for us, but we are too intimidated by it to think of mastering it in anything but the technical sense. Wherever it leads us we must follow and go with it all the way. But we have been living with this demigod for a dozen years now, and one can't remain excited or keenly alert about it indefinitely. Important as it is, the attention we give it has become passive, perfunctory, and frequently unthinking.

Perhaps one of the most significant of the demigods of our time is the luxuriant fertility of *nature-science*. Today's students evidence a

bland expectation that the ever-rising curve of material abundance will continue its persistent upward movement. They are confident that science will continue to unlock the secret chambers of nature at a constantly accelerated clip. They believe that what Ira Wallach has dubbed "the fat life" has just begun. We are told by acute observers that we are changing from an economy of scarcity with emphasis on problems of production and distribution to an economy of abundance with an emphasis on consumption. This consumption tends to be more and more what W. H. Whyte has termed "inconspicuous consumption." This economic activity in no way sets us apart from our comparably consuming fellows, as contrasted with the more ostentatious "conspicuous consumption" pictured by Thorstein Veblen at the turn of the century.

One suspects that among all our demigods this fertility god of nature-science receives from today's student generation a less pallid and more solid commitment than most. They have considerable, if quiet, faith that this power will not fail them. This faith is strengthened and nourished by all the radio and television "pitch men" whom they have heard since they can remember. It lies behind all the pleas to replace their "artificially obsolescent" possessions with more modern and more wonderful successors. It is evidenced in all the handouts from business and government propagandists recommending the American way of free-enterprise capitalism as incurably successful and inevitably headed for ever-higher levels of fertility and achievement.

Since this kind of abundance is becoming more and more available to all Americans, the dream of the aspiring student does not seem to include the same commitment to pre-eminence in his chosen field which in former generations could alone guarantee such abundance. It seems to be enough to relax in the moderately elevated echelons of administrative, professional, and bureaucratic success where the good life is the birthright of all. The whole attitude toward nature and its powers seems to represent a kind of implicit commitment to an investigation and mastery in nature-science-technology-industry. This commitment may well be the dominant culture motif of Western man in our time. Students, well tutored by their elders, demonstrate a kind of naive and literal submission to "facts," to the data of nature as unlocked by science and technology and spewed forth by industry. This is a submission to "facts" uninterpreted and unevaluated, "facts" uncriticized if only technically coherent.

CONFORMITY. Most significant among the forces of society loom the half-gods of conforming acceptability, bland relativistic tolerance, indulgent chummy relationships. Here there is a forthright commitment to success, but inoffensive, unostentatious success. As William Whyte puts it in *The Organization Man*, cooperation has replaced competition as our ideal way of relating to each other. To be sure, some

people do get to the very top by cooperating better than their fellows! This is the potent social force which tells us, in Willy Loman's terms in *Death of a Salesman*, that we must be liked, "I mean well liked." David Riesman in *The Lonely Crowd* has called this the "other-directed" generation in contrast to the inner-directed individualism of our forbears. Our whole existence is influenced by the desire to be accepted by our fellows, to be "well liked." As Riesman puts it, it is as though we had radar in our heads, which tells us what our environment is and what it wants of us, and then we proceed to conform to those expectations. Professional success in this framework profoundly motivates today's students. Both the crowdedness of our universities and the necessity of a degree for professional advancement make for intense pressure upon students before and after admission. The rising trend toward graduate work also reflects this pressure. Career success is a key aspect of the cult of conforming acceptability.

Professor Philip Jacob in *Changing Values in College* describes what he calls the "subtle selective process which ferrets out those students who are not sufficiently adaptive to acquire the distinctive value-patterns of the college graduate."² He reports that there appears to be a greater homogeneity of values among students at the end rather than at the beginning of their college years. Fewer seniors than freshmen espouse deviating beliefs. One does not, he feels, see a liberalizing of student values, but a process "to socialize the individual, to refine, polish, or 'shape up' his values so that he can fit comfortably into the ranks of American college alumni."³ Getting along with others is at a premium. Ideas, their exchange, difference, modification, consistency, incompatibility, seem to be of little significance.

Perhaps here we have the key to the failure which Jacob documents. This is the failure of the social sciences to make significant changes in students' values in the four years, through subject matter, course work, faculty competence and endeavor, and diversity of teaching method. As Nevitt Sanford, a University of California psychologist engaged with four colleagues in a five-year study at Vassar, reports: "One of the main functions of the student culture is to keep the faculty at a respectful distance . . . to prevent any deep involvements with courses or ideas, or any adult relationships with faculty members that might threaten the girls' satisfaction with themselves as they are, or with the views they already have."⁴ In the same article the author comments on other influences of the student culture: "Toward one another students are expected to be friendly, cooperative, pleasant. Toward the faculty

² Philip Jacob, *Changing Values in College*, p. 5. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁴ From the article "Is College Education Wasted on Women?" *Ladies' Home Journal*, May, 1957, p. 79. Copyright 1957 by The Curtis Publishing Company.

polite, dutiful, impersonal. . . . The emphasis is on moderation, keeping everyone on the same level of behaviour and accomplishment. If a student thinks too much or talks too much, if she is either too indifferent or too ambitious, the student culture has effective means for bringing her into line. . . . For the greater number, the student culture is the prime educational force at work.”⁵ Jacob, describing the ideal teacher in student eyes, comments that he needs to be a kind of “psychiatric baby-sitter.” The teacher is supposed to be an exciting, interesting performer for a passive audience, rather than a stimulator of ideas and debate.

Bland, indulgent tolerance toward others is another face of the conformity demigod. If I am to be well liked and acceptable to others, I must accept them, I must tolerate them, even those strange characters on the faculty! Not ideas, but getting along with people is the clue. This is doubtless related to some of the contemporary surge of interest in other religions. We must be tolerant of the religion of the Hindu or the Buddhist or the Muslim if we are to be acceptable to others in the world. Chummy, pleasant relationships, below the level of critical interchange of thought and ideas, seem the goal for most.

This indulgent, uncritical tolerance in the realm of ideas and values is doubtless both an outgrowth of and contributor to a widespread relativism as to truth and values of any kind. My truth is supposedly as good as, but no better than, your truth, Hindu truth, or any truth. Behind this kind of relativism there lurks a nihilistic specter, the question of whether, after all, there are such realities as God, truth, or meaning at all.

We seem to be committed to conforming acceptability, and this contributes enormously to the malaise of our time. As Whyte puts it, “The quest for normalcy is one of the great breeders of neurosis.”⁶ We are a lonely generation, and our desire to be well liked is both a sign of our loneliness and a significant contributor to it. Our relations with our fellows are based on indulgent, chummy, low-level tolerance, liking to be well liked, accepting to be accepted. This shallow foundation will not support the kind of deep-going fellowship and profound mutual knowing which alone can overcome and dissipate our loneliness. We are “the lonely crowd.”

MANIPULATION. Among the powerful social forces of our day is that of manipulative, bureaucratic power. It provides amazing new possibilities of pushing our fellows up or down the bureaucratic hierarchy, on campus or off, faculty, student and administration. So quietly can we manipulate that the manipulatee does not detect the manipulator! This power is cruel and impersonal. Almost all decisions are reached

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 78, 79.

⁶ W. H. Whyte, *The Organization Man*, p. 397. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956.

in committee and conference after a highly sophisticated exercise of committeemanship and conferencemanship. Arnold Toynbee has recently commented on the immense cruelty of committees, doing things to persons which no person on the committee would ever do alone. The bureaucratic structure snowballs in size and is self-perpetuating. Its whole is a kind of lumbering, ponderous dinosaur, far greater than the sum of its parts. Yet into such bureaucracies, into government and business, education and the professions, the great majority of our contemporary students plan to go.

MASS COMMUNICATION. A fourth social force is mass communications power and its fantastic possibilities for "engineering consent," "penetrating the mass market," creating artificial needs and new values overnight. Students tend to be cynical about and grudgingly respectful toward this demigod at one and the same time. Perhaps as much as any group outside their teachers they resist mass communications. Yet in professional plans there is a reluctant admission that this power must be placated.

RELIGIOUSNESS. A final social force is the new religiousness of our American culture. Students again are among the more critical as they confront the cultural phenomenon which is sweeping millions of Americans into vague affirmations of faith in something, it makes not too much difference what. In this day of perilous threat to our national security and way of life, and of rootless, lonely insecurity for great multitudes of persons, religion itself may become idolatrous. Much of institutional Christianity caught up in this phenomenon appears in danger of reducing the faith to the characteristic cultic practices and exercises of a new religion, Americanism. Though campus communities are among the more critical, much which passes by the name of "campus religion" today seems little above this level. It could be that this new religiousness is, in Bonhoeffer's terms, a kind of anachronism, a "last gasp" survival and feeble revival of religiousness in an age which is really not capable of religion. The vagueness of contemporary student religion and its lack of substance are real proof that we are approaching the "time of no religion at all," when only nostalgia and a kind of leftover feeling for the proprieties give religion the ambiguous strength it appears to demonstrate.

A Christian Analysis: Some Hopeful Clues

Now what does all this add up to? Perhaps there may lurk among these tepid commitments to the half-gods of nature and society real clues to the meaning of the present time. These may even be clues which God is using to point beyond these idolatries to the gospel of Jesus Christ. There is, we believe, nothing going on in the world which

is irrelevant to what God has done and is doing in Christ. There is no neutral area. All that is going on is some aspect of the continuing struggle between God's grace in Jesus Christ and the structured, demonic powers of evil ranged against him. Historical events, social structures, our lives, bear witness to this struggle. They comprise mixtures of God's grace and frustrating, distorting, demonic power, in varying and uncertain ratios, as we and all men choose in numberless large and small decisions for or against what God is doing. Are there such clues in the present campus and cultural situation? I think there are many, and we shall examine a few.

FROM SELF-CONCERN TO CONCERN FOR OTHERS. In the commitment to conforming acceptability, chumminess, and indulgence, in our "other-directedness," for example, we can see a clue to the dismal breakdown of the every-tub-must-stand-on-its-own-bottom, every-man-for-himself-and-the-devil-take-the-hindmost kind of rugged individualism which has characterized much of our culture in the past. The cure for our present conformity and other-directedness does not lie in a revival of such old-style individualism. It was always untrue to the real facts of the socialness of our personalities and our existence. The very essence of Christian ethics is another kind of other-directedness, a constant awareness of other people, how they feel, what they think and need, what they are suffering, what they are enjoying, and a shaping of our own actions in response to them. We need, in other words, to take this clue, to move from this distorted other-directedness which sees all others revolving around me, to whom I must relate successfully for my peace of mind, to a fully Christian other-directedness, several levels deeper than the first. In it I see myself revolving around others, to whom I may relate for their benefit. This changes the thrust of tolerance. I am now tolerant of them as persons whose freedom and selfhood I respect, but whose chummy indulgence I do not need to have, whose opinions and actions I may criticize and dispute, and whose ultimate welfare does not even depend upon whether they "like me." Incidentally, I will be far less lonely with one whom I love and with whom I profoundly disagree, at the level of conviction, than with one whom I "like," and who "likes" me, because we never permit ourselves to be involved in any subject to the degree where our inevitable disagreements would emerge.

This shift changes the thrust of the commitment to career success. It may now be seen as preparation for the highest excellence attainable in a profession or occupation which can provide "goods and services" to the human community, a real "vocation" from God. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer once said, to say that success is not our primary aim is not to say that success is unimportant, but the process, quality, and direction

of that success make all the difference.⁷ For all of us at some time and for some of us permanently, this demands a success which most may deem a failure.

FROM PRUDISHNESS TO REALISM. In the fascination with biologic sex and the possibilities of psychological adjustment God seems to be giving us a clue to the inescapable fact that knowledge of the "facts of life" and a kind of clinical knowledge of the deeper levels of our own psyche do not in themselves produce a right use of sex and self. Our misuse of sex and our misuse of self are aspects of a total and fundamental maladjustment which the Bible describes as sin. It is a pervasive disease which distorts all the good things of God's creation. We are reminded by our frustration in these areas that the very desires for total gratification, total domination, and total "peace of mind" adjustment are themselves aspects of that same sin.

FROM EXPLOITATION BY THE FEW TO ABUNDANCE FOR ALL. Our commitment to the fertility of nature-science is a clue to the fact that man is at long last beginning to realize the immense possibilities of God's creation. Through the application of science in technology and industry we may be on the threshold of placing the wealth of the creation at the service of man, which is surely the biblical understanding of creation. But inasmuch as this commitment is a part of a broad cultural motif, which is not really investigative since it is uncritically obedient to whatever comes out, it is not really mastery but simply the efficient direction of what is accepted as inevitable. Thus it is a clue to our awful distortion of the creation and our subjection of ourselves, of the human community, to the creation, rather than the reverse. Our "forced feeding" consumption, whether conspicuous or inconspicuous, set in the midst of a world more than half ill-fed, ill-clothed, ill-housed, ill-educated, is not a clue to the evil of plenty; it rather points to the enormous task of enabling the whole human community to participate in the productivity and plenty which have begun to emerge. And here we must remember the warning which the Bible, in the sayings of Jesus himself, sets over the accumulation of and indulgence in things for their own sake.

FROM SENTIMENTAL IDEALISM TO CHRISTIAN REALISM. In the oft-mentioned lack of conviction on today's campuses, in the unwillingness to be involved in "causes," we see the near cynicism of many students with regard to any idealism about the future. In the highly developed interest and skill in criticism evidenced by many of the best students, we see, of course, signs of the vast disillusionment and frustration of our times. As one campus newspaper editorialized

⁷ See Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*. The Macmillan Company.

in reaction to the Jacob study, *Changing Values in College*: "Today's problems are too big, and we as students have found no simple answers to urge us into taking violent stands for this or that view. Students today are faced with a fractured world. Our preceding generations have left us with no unifying factors but a confusion of philosophies, psychological theory and formula answers that appall us, even stifle us from attempting to weed out what is valuable."⁸

On the positive side such campus attitudes may be a clue to a readiness for a Christian realism about man and all his works. Such realism has been long overdue. This is a readiness characterized by a more serious carefulness and a more precise analysis in the social sciences and the humanities. But on the negative side such campus attitudes are a clue to the way in which "realism" outside the context of hope and faith may undergo a subtle transformation into cynicism. Few thinking people in the past have been privileged to base violent stands on simple answers. This implication is itself an oversimplification of history, in the recent or distant past. One has the feeling that for this editorialist, "stands" are inherently "violent" and violence is a disapproving word.

This general uncommittedness, or commitment only to noncommitment, is a clue to how far we do stand from a faith in God and his purposes. The uncertainties of this uncommittedness are so close and yet so far from the ghastly uncertainties which are an element of Christian faith. For our faith stands in the terrible gap between what we see and what we hope, and lives in a crisis between believing that God's purpose in Jesus Christ gives meaning to all of life, and doubting that there is either purpose or God. There is a sense in which commitment and decisiveness are life itself, and noncommitment is life at a kind of high-class vegetable level. Commitment has always entailed risks—the virile risks of danger, the more dreadful risks of failure, foolishness and ludicrousness. In our human situation the refusal to take such risks is in a very real sense a refusal to live. We have spoken frequently of tepid commitments to the demigods of nature and society. Inasmuch as they are tepid commitments to puny and distorted gods, they signify life of a sort, but a kind of tepid half-life, devoid of Kierkegaard's "passion and risk."

FROM INDIVIDUALISM TO COMMUNITY. The vast power of bureaucratic structures rising about us on every hand is a clue to the fact that we live our lives in "bodies"; there is "the body social," "the body politic," "the body economic," "professional bodies," "labor bodies." In the Church as the Body of Christ all our lives are seen as inextricably linked in a vast complex of influences and pressures with the lives of others about us, before us and after us. This fact underlines our con-

⁸ From the Wilson College *Billboard*, November 15, 1957.

tention that rugged individualism was never the realistic way for men to live. But in the sophisticated possibilities and actualities of manipulation of man by man in these "bodies," we are called once again to a shift of centers. We must not calculate how the bureaucracy can serve me, with its other members as smoothly synchronized gears in my mechanism, but how can I participate with other human beings in and beyond this structure to help it find and fulfil its human meaning. We must help people to be human within it and to devote it to the humanization of life beyond it. And we can thus be recalled to the Church where the Holy Spirit chastens our manipulative impulses and links us together in love. But it is a Church where the demonic powers of manipulative bureaucracy are also hard at work to erode human community.

The impressiveness of mass communications power and our current high tide of religiosity are insistent reminders to us that men will communicate something and will worship something, come what may. If we are not communicating the climate of concern and love with which God surrounds us in Jesus Christ, we are communicating some other climate. And the demonic powers can make use of the form as well as the content of this communication, as the crass bludgeoning of much of the contemporary advertising "pitch" gives abundant witness. The new religiousness of our culture is a clue to our terrible need for the God and Father of Jesus Christ, our Lord. It reveals our everlasting inclination to make other gods before him, to worship the creations and inventions of our own hands and imaginations. Beyond this pseudo-worship there moves the God who is calling us to repent and be saved, to turn and find wholeness and meaning in worshipping him.

FROM NEUTRALITY AND OBJECTIVITY TO COMMITMENT AND FAITH. One very hopeful prospect for the universities lies in the present turmoil over "values" which occupies much faculty thinking and is the subject matter for discussions in learned societies. To be sure, there are still faculty people who affirm the possibility of teaching without communicating viewpoint, presuppositions, or value judgments. But there are a growing number who are not content with this description of their assignment or with the theory that it can be done. It may well be that in some measure the unwillingness of many of today's students to be committed represents a typical "cultural lag." Some professors are pushing beyond such an attitude, but unfortunately encounter a generation of students profoundly conditioned in home, community, and schools by a now patently outworn myth of a thoroughly attainable objectivity. A more fruitful line for teachers seems to be in the direction of a frank admission that all teaching and communication convey some value judgments and presuppositions. The way to greater objectivity lies in uncovering, admitting, and making allowance for such value judgments and presuppositions. We do well as teachers

and students to know where and what these are, and then as teachers to expose them honestly to our students. In this way we permit the various value systems to clash and cross-fertilize in our classrooms. We also learn to respect value judgments differing from ours and to espouse our own best judgments in honest freedom. There is a sense in which a university must have the leisure and the untrammelled freedom to pursue a relatively ivory-towered exploration beyond the present frontiers of information and evaluation. But such a study as Jacob's warns us who are teachers that unless we take a more "existential" attitude in our teaching, encouraging valuation, decision, and commitment, we are inviting the verdict that we have done little but furnish raw material.

In other words, for all of us, students, teachers and administrators, there is a growing realization that "knowledge" and "education" are not the subject matters of a neat compartment called "mind." They are matters affecting and affected by the total person, his thinking, his believing, his emotional involvements, his loves and hates, his background and loyalties, his hopes and his fears, the future shape and direction of his personality and his purposes. Closely related to this realization is the increasing inability of outworn curricular departmentalization to keep subject matters segregated from each other any longer. This is true within the fields of social science, natural science, and the humanities. Part of this thrust toward wholeness in the curriculum comes from the actual living areas which the various disciplines study and teach. Part of the thrust comes from the simple recognition of the sterility of looking at a great cultural and scientific complex through a series of narrow and unconnected windows, and the impossibility of staying out of each other's back yards in the face of this emerging unity. But as one moves more freely from "Ethics" to "Nuclear Physics" to "Labor Problems" to "Cultural Anthropology" to "Contemporary Drama" to "Ancient Philosophy" to "The Music of Bach" to "The Modern Dance" with a growing sense of their interrelationships, one finds that value judgments, decisions, and commitments are more and more difficult to evade and postpone.

Church and University

Both the Christian community and the university are called to be profoundly committed. Both have a heritage to communicate. Both are continually breaking through new frontiers into the future. The Church draws from the most precious part of its heritage the added conviction that beyond the new frontiers God will be at work. His work there and then will be continuous with what he has already done and begun. He will be working out in new times and new situations the fulness of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And the Church believes that in him, as St. Paul put it, "all things hold together," so that whatever the university discovers and explores will receive its ultimate dimension

at the hands of God in Christ. The university may or may not share these additional convictions of the Church at its institutional "heart." But it can give itself to neither of them with the same abandon which the Church must experience to exist at all. For the university must also encourage the labors of those whose value systems press them to challenge the very truth of these Christian value judgments. The university has a commitment to investigate all that nature, man, and history place before it. It is the conviction of this writer that this investigation will be increasingly fruitful as it is recognized that the commitment to investigate includes the commitment to evaluate. In the university, however, there can be no enforced uniformity in this evaluation; a real university will be the scene of competing and cross-fertilizing evaluations.

The Church does well to remember that its long life has again and again been stimulated by the heresies which it has finally rejected in the extreme form of their original statement. And the Church must be willing for the university to have the freedom to challenge and debate the very heart of the Church's fate. The Church will be stimulated by such challenge and debate to push beyond its creedal frontiers to new ways of knowing Jesus Christ. It will also have a magnificent opportunity to declare its faith in the university and to receive the insights which the university is forever unearthing.

How do we know? How do we know ourselves? How do we know our world? How do we know God? In one sense these are the most profound questions the human mind can ask, for upon their answer depends all that may properly be called wisdom. Unless a satisfactory answer can be found to these queries, all our supposed knowledge shrivels to opinion and all our supposed wisdom deflates into fancy. Yet in another sense such questions are trivial. They are not trivial in the sense that epistemology is a futile discipline. It is not. They are trivial in the sense that epistemology is an optional discipline. The science of seeking to discover how we know is a sophisticated afterthought. We do not wait upon its findings before assimilating facts or forming opinions. Life is both psychologically and chronologically prior to logic. It is conceivable that a person might live his life untroubled by such speculation and that a person might assemble quite a sum of knowledge unruffled by such counsels of caution as might be enjoined upon him by epistemological sophistication.

Religion, Science, and Epistemology

For most people epistemology is a discipline engaged in by those whose ideas are suffering attack, and it is engaged in only in those areas of knowledge which are suffering attack. Unless someone has touched some tender nerve of knowledge, most people are content to say, "I don't know how I know. I just know. Don't you?" Strangely enough, there is a real way in which natural scientists are, because of their prestige, least troubled by epistemological questions. They are happily above the strictures of the logicians. Everyone can see the fallacy in the argument that since communists read Karl Marx, everyone who reads Marx must be a communist. The fallacy is called affirming the consequent. Yet empirical science is *based* upon the rigorous and *frequent* use of this fallacy! For example, since it has been determined that certain materials transform themselves into a certain form during a certain period of time, therefore, says the scientist, this material which I have in this form was in a certain different form so many years before!

The scientist has three refuges from the onslaughts of the logicians. First, the scientist may point to his success in harnessing nature for the

purposes of man. He says that since his method has been successfully employed in the past, and since it has resulted in manifest and manifold good things, it is its own justification. In effect, he is telling the logician not to kill the goose that lays the golden egg. This is the *pragmatic* justification of knowledge. Second, the scientist tries to organize his thoughts into a meaningful system of knowledge. His goal is to find patterns of meaning which extend from the microcosm to the macrocosm. He wants to know if what he knows about certain physical entities is coherent with what he knows about others. He is constantly striving to demolish the barriers which bifurcate his knowledge of the universe. He has a fundamental antipathy to compartmentalization. Therefore, the second criterion of knowledge is *coherence*. Third, he presumes that nature is not bent on deceiving him. He lives on the basis of the presupposition that asking the right questions of the stuff with which he works will elicit meaningful answers. In this he is assuming that there is some measure of correspondence between ordered thought and reality. He can never prove that he is not ultimately deceived. He moves from hypothesis to hypothesis. One hypothesis lays the basis for another, and a stack of hypotheses leads to mutual confirmation. If *correspondence* between thought and reality is the third criterion of knowledge, its proof for the scientist rests not in itself but in the criteria of internal coherence and pragmatic result. He is finally committed to his results simply because they are *adequate* to all the facts in a given situation.

To the logician who wishes to cavil with the scientist that science operates on the basis of a logical fallacy, the scientist can offer only that he is trying to give an adequate description of reality as it is given to him in experience. He offers no more than a description of reality as it appears to him from where he stands.

This phrase "reality as it appears to him from where he stands" offers a clue to the position in which the Christian stands in relation to the logician. In a strictly logical sense he is no worse off than is the scientist. To be sure, he can never prove that there is a God *out there* who corresponds to his ideas of God or to his religious experiences. Neither can the scientist prove that there is a world out there which corresponds to his impressions. In the degree to which the scientist sticks to speaking concerning reality as it appears to him from where he stands, he is simply trying to give an adequate account of his "experience of faith" under the same circumstances. To demand that the "religious experiment" shall use the same instruments as a scientific experiment is to ask too much. The scientist's antipathy to compartmentalization does not require of him that he study astronomy through a microscope.

There are, however, certain radical distinctions between the activity of the scientist and that of the religious person who is following out Paul's injunction to "test everything; hold fast what is good." The

scientist chooses to deal only with material in which he presumes he will get results by the use of his methods. Therefore he arbitrarily selects those things which he believes will fit into a class. He chooses those things which may be presumed capable of subsumption into species or genera. Hence he is *methodologically antipathetic to the singular*. It slips through the sieves in which he garners reality. In choosing to deal with the comparable he has ruled out the absolute. Thus he cannot discuss such an event as the Incarnation scientifically, since it by definition is singularly unrepeatable and therefore not part of a class.

Furthermore, the scientist chooses to deal with the quantitatively measurable. He is *methodologically antipathetic to the valuational*. For his purpose, within the limits of his investigation, he must either reduce the qualitative to the quantitative or ignore it. As a scientist he must work within the boundaries of his method. In the degree to which he recognizes this, he knows that his capability is restricted to things which he can classify or measure. Whether there is anything beyond the limits of his method is beyond his knowledge as a *scientist*. In the degree to which he says that there is nothing true beyond the truth to be discovered in and through his method, he stops being a scientist and resembles rather the drunk who lost a five-dollar bill in the middle of the block but looked for it at the corner where the light was better.

Furthermore, he is *methodologically antipathetic to personal involvement*. The less he is involved in his results, the better, lest he be tempted to add his thumb to the scales to make his formulae check. His interest in the results, whether to confirm a pet theory or to get a promotion, may well be a hindrance rather than a help. He strives consciously to be a spectator. It is because the practitioners of the social sciences are participants (for example, men with families studying family life) as well as spectators that the physical scientists tend to look down upon them as a different and inferior breed of cats.

Hence, in the minds of some, the academic spectrum shades from the light of objectivity to the dark of subjectivity, from detachment to involvement, with pure mathematics at one end and such shades of darkness as metaphysics, religion, and black magic at the other, with economics, sociology, and psychology more or less gray between! In the sense in which religion deals with the singular, the valuational, and the personal, the scientist is rightly dubious of its "scientific" character. For the Christian, God is not a member of a class; there is more to ethics than description of what people do; and personal involvement is of the essence. The distinction between the scientist and the Christian is not between two sets of facts but two methods or attitudes toward the same facts. There has been much talk of boundaries between scientific facts and religious knowledge, of science as dealing with the "how" and religion as dealing with the "why." Has such talk been proper? Is a

line to be drawn between geology and Genesis? Or is the line to be drawn between alternative methods?

Two Eyes on Reality

Perhaps it is helpful to remember Polyphemus, the one-eyed giant. It is a physiological fact that we perceive depth because we have two eyes. One eye, for all practical purposes, sees all the somethings. The second eye puts things into perspective. Perhaps the present impasse between Logical Positivism and Existentialism arises from the fact that each of the two competing philosophies tries to see everything from one eye. The Logical Positivist chooses to see life from the side of the classifiable, the quantitative, and the impersonal, thereby restricting "knowledge" to these aspects. The Existentialist chooses to see life from the side of the singular, the qualitative, and the personal, thereby restricting "knowledge" to these aspects. Both are one-sided. *Life is compounded of fact and imagination*; man is both an ingenious assemblage of portable plumbing and the bearer of the divine image.

The distinction between scientific method and religious imagination is one of attitude. Both attitudes appear even in the same people and are no more or less compartmentalized than having two eyes is to be compartmentalized. The realms of science and imagination, fact and faith, reason and emotion, are *coextensive*. Love is as much an object for analysis by an electrocardiogram as it is the province of the poet. Dare we leave any realm of life unscrutinized? Second, these realms are of *equal validity*. Elizabeth Barrett Browning's imaginative recitals of her *knowledge* of Robert Browning are no less "true" than a socio-psychological analysis of their mutual behavior patterns. Some love poems are trivial, but so are some facts! Third, there is interplay between these realms, for both scientific fact and poetic imagination are conceived in wonder. Einstein once wrote:

The fairest thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion which stands at the cradle of true art and true science. He who knows it not and can no longer wonder, no longer feel amazement, is as good as dead, a snuffed-out candle.¹

He wrote that neither as a scientist nor as a poet, but as both. He wrote it as a two-eyed man, perceiving depth. That, perhaps, made him a better man than Polyphemus, avoiding both sheer calculation and unreasoned fanaticism.

In, About, and Around About

The exploration of the realms of science and religion, fact and imagination, reason and faith, began with the assertion that epistemology

¹ Albert Einstein, *The World as I See It*, Alan Harris, translator, p. 5. New York: Philosophical Library, 1949.

is a discipline which comes after knowing takes place. It is not prior to knowing. It is not even prior to scientific knowledge. Scientific knowledge may be said to go through three steps. It commences in the experienced fact, which is then described. Then there is reflection upon the description. The steps are experience, description, and reflection. Though the question of how we know is relevant to each of the steps and may be reflected back upon them, experience and description are prior to such reflection. In a somewhat parallel way, there is the same sequence in religion.

The Christian faith begins with the fact of Jesus Christ. The Christian religion springs from the experience of this *fact*. *Theology* is the systematic description of this experience. *Dogma* is the reflection of the Christian community upon the systematic description given by theologians. Perhaps this gives a clue to some answers to some problems which beset the Christian on a campus. No scientist would dare make his appeal on the ground of his reflections about his descriptions. He would not even dare root his appeal on the basis of his descriptions. His appeal is to the experienced facts which lie behind the descriptions and the reflections. In like fashion, perhaps we are wrongheaded if we attempt to "sell" people on dogma, which is the reflection of the Church, or on theology, which is the description by theologians. *Our appeal is to the experienced facts.*

Faith is response to experienced facts. Faith may be defined as a vital response of the whole person to the God revealed in Jesus Christ, witnessed to in the Bible, and preached by the Church. This definition offers a clue to methods of evangelism and nurture. It suggests a sequence. It is not our business to start by getting people to believe the creeds. Creeds are the product of church-thinking. They are dogma. It is not even our business to start by getting people to believe the Bible. The Bible is the product of individuals, moved by the Holy Spirit, describing their experience. It is theology. Dogma and theology are reflection and description of experienced facts; they are not the facts themselves. Jesus Christ is the Way; dogma and theology are only maps. Perhaps a chart of parallel sequences will be helpful.

Jesus Christ	Fact	Faith	Experience
Bible	Theology	Doctrine	Description
Church	Dogma	Creeds	Reflection

This chart suggests some approaches to several issues in which the Christian is involved. First, it serves as a constant reminder that no one becomes a Christian, any more than one becomes a scientist, without some laboratory work. Jesus Christ is the central fact. Christian experience begins and ends in him. This serves as a constant reminder that the faith of a dull student may be as vital as that of the most intellectually sophisticated. It reminds a campus that it may even be harder for

the astute to enter the Kingdom; that a campus group wrestling with intellectual issues is no greater a part of the Kingdom than a backwoods prayer meeting. We are justified by grace through faith; not even *intellectual* good works will buy the Kingdom. The problem is to challenge those who can think to think to the very fringes of thought, as their Christian vocation on a campus, without engendering the fallacy that thought is the only basic Christian pursuit. It must be remembered, of course, that many people may be drawn toward an experience of Christ through the life of the Christian community or through reading the Bible. They may become familiar with the creeds and doctrine, dogma and theology, reflection and description, before they experience the fact of Christ which begets faith. It is necessary, therefore, to distinguish between theological priority and psychological sequence. Theologically the faith of Jesus Christ is prior to the theology in the Bible and the dogma of the Church. Psychologically one may experience the Church and thereby be led to reflect upon the meaning of Jesus Christ. In any case, such sequences are suggestive and not normative.

Another issue which may appear in this chart is the distinction between believing *in* and believing *that*. The distinction was made by Luther and Calvin to indicate the difference between the faith of a believing Christian *in* God and the belief of a devil *about* God. As they put it, the Christian believes *in* God's existence; the devils believe *that* God exists. The distinction is fundamentally between knowledge in which we are personally involved and knowledge in which we are not. The distinction presupposes that we shall have a different relationship to personal entities from our relationship to impersonal entities. Another way of putting this distinction, also used by Luther and Calvin, is to distinguish between faith as *assent* and as *trust*. The devils assent to the belief *that* there is a God, while Christians trust *in* God. Assent has to do with intellectual knowledge and opinion. Trust has to do with personal relationship. As Calvin puts it, it is not enough to have a knowledge of God fluttering in the brain, for the knowledge of God must transform the heart. The same idea appears in the Old Testament where the word used for Adam's sexual *knowledge* of his wife is also used for man's *knowledge* of God. Consequently, in its deepest sense faith is to be understood as an act of personal relationship and not as an attitude towards propositions.²

This distinction between *in* and *about*, knowledge by participation and knowledge by manipulation, is paralleled by the distinction between the living experience of Christ and the reflection of that experience in the Bible and theology. To this distinction may be added a third: *around about*. Some of us have friends whom we know and meet every day. Our relation to them is different from our relation to those with whom we correspond. Out and beyond this group are those, perhaps an aunt or uncle, whom we have never met, but know only in an *around about*

fashion. We may have heard much or little about them, but we have never met them. We address those whom we know with the second person pronoun "you." We refer to the others as "he" or "she."

This distinction may be illuminated by an example from our relation to art. It is not possible to sustain the relationship of *in* alone. Theology and dogma are not unnecessary appendices to faith. The reaction of the untutored observer of art is often simply, "I like what I like." No one may question the authenticity for him of his experience. However, there is a difference between the person who simply likes what he likes and the person who studies critically various paintings and begins to see what he likes in many of them. He may grow to like some paintings which he did not like before. As he progresses in his interest in art, he may begin to read the art historians, and his views on art may begin to approximate the views of others. This is not bad. It is bad only if his reading of the art historians deprives him of the immediacy of experience. If he is capable, and not everyone is, he moves through these stages inevitably. The point is that one must start at the first stage. The phonies are those who start at the stage of learning what they "should like" before they "like what they like."

This clue, offered by art, works two ways. On the one hand, it suggests the primacy of experience in Christian faith. Enjoyment is prior to appreciation. On the other hand, it suggests a parallel to the criteria for knowledge. The person whose relation is participation (*in*) offers only pragmatic justification. Christianity is meaningful for him. The person whose relation is enriched by thoughtful description (*about*) of why he is a Christian offers *coherence* as justification. His view of the universe fits together meaningfully. The person who finds himself part of a group of people whose reflections (*around about*) about the Christian faith

² A whole set of polarities can be drawn up, deriving more or less from the opposition of *in* and *that*. The list can be amended or extended, and it may reveal temperamental bias for or against the personal on the part of the author or readers! Its implications are far-reaching for all phases of academic inquiry, as well as for theology, ethics, and personal relations.

IN	THAT
Personal	Impersonal
History	Nature
Subjective	Objective
Concrete	Abstract
Qualitative	Quantitative
Love	Law
Ethical	Mystical
Temporal	Spatial
Hebrew Culture	Greek Culture
Reformation	Renaissance
Augustine	Thomas Aquinas
Poetic	Scientific
Participation	Manipulation

reach a consensus offers correspondence as justification. Notice carefully that neither the Christian nor the scientist proves that he has reached reality out there. They cannot prove that their thoughts correspond with reality. Their consensus with others is merely confirmatory. The credentials of Christianity are Jesus Christ—the experienced fact; the Bible—the experienced fact described; and the creeds—the experienced fact described and reflected upon.

This offers some clue to the problem of doubt. May one doubt and remain a Christian? Can the Christian doubt? Are there any doubtless Christians? The trouble with these questions is that the word “doubt” has a whole hatful of meanings. The meanings are different depending upon what they are opposed to. We doubt people in a different way from the way we doubt things. The opposite to faith in a person (the *in* relation) is *indifference*. We doubt ideas in a different way from the way we doubt people. The opposite to faith in an idea (the *about* relation) is *disagreement*. We doubt communities in a different way from the way we doubt people or ideas. The opposite to faith in a community's value (the *around about* relation) is *rebellion*. Perhaps this means that we should be less concerned on the campus about disagreement or rebellion than about indifference!

Stripping Away the Veils

Every community has its norms. In some sense every class in a college or university is under authority. The student is expected (come examination time) to have formed some educated conclusions in agreement with the professor, the textbook, or the consensus of the class. The three possible authorities are a person, a book, or a community. Truth is supposed to have been unveiled (which is what “revelation” means) through one or the other or all three. Every fraternity and sorority is under its president (or alumni adviser), its charter, and the local membership (or national membership). All of us have the meaning of life revealed under such norms. Revelation is anything which helps us make sense of our world.

All of us are born into some culture. Our parents were formed by it. Our playmates were formed by it. Our communities are products of it. Life is unveiled to us in community. We do not even discover what it is to be a person until we are confronted by other persons. We know ourselves only as we are known. When we go to school we begin to learn about life from books. To the motivations which have been formed in us by people-in-community are added the facts of science and history gleaned from books. Finally, we may find some person who embodies the meaning of life for us.

These three sources of *general* revelation about the meaning of life (community, book, person) find their counterparts in what the Christian means when he talks about God's unveiling of himself in *special*

revelation. Our first glimpse of what Christianity means probably comes when we find ourselves in a community of believers. There we learn to pray, to worship, and to share in a common life. In some way each of these persons (some more than others) is a revelation of the meaning of the Christian faith. Each is a priest to us of the mercies of God. Perhaps this means that on our campuses our activities should be so guided by this insight that people shall glimpse what being a Christian means from what happens when Christians get together. Then, having something of the meaning of Christianity revealed to us in the community of believers, we gain historical insight and breadth through the study of the Bible. Finally, behind both Church and Bible stands the one who would rule our lives: Jesus Christ. In him we find the ultimate meaning of life itself. *The essence of Christianity is God present in a person.*

There is a nice problem here, which bears some discussion. It is quite obvious that in terms of motivation we are probably more strongly moved by a community than by a book. The Roman Catholics have solved this by subordinating the Bible to the Church. For them the Bible means what the Church says it does. This is similar to playing checkers with someone who says that he is the sole interpreter of the rules. Only through stupidity can he lose. But for the children of the Reformation, the Church stands under the Book. And, may it be added, the Book stands under Christ, for the Bible is the manger in which the Christ is laid. Christ is the Lord of scripture. The Bible is the charter of the Church. Faith is a vital response of the whole person to the God revealed in Jesus Christ, witnessed to in the Bible, and preached by the Church. Revelation is threefold: Christ, Bible, Church—in that order of subordination.

But is the Bible true? This is a modern question. To be sure, Augustine discovered discrepancies in the Bible and admonished the reader "to raise himself above the history, and search for those things which the history itself was written to set forth."³ Even the Reformers took the reliability of the biblical narratives pretty much for granted. Only in the nineteenth century did the full force of biblical criticism disturb the simple reliance upon the Bible. The Bible was no longer the unequivocal word of God. The book which had been sacredly safe from attack was now under attack from many quarters. We cannot live in integrity on a campus without facing this, admitting it, and helping students and faculty to understand what the Bible is really about. The period of Protestant Orthodoxy is passed. It died under the onslaughts of theological Liberalism. Orthodoxy had said simply that the Bible was the word of God, period! Liberalism showed that the Bible was the words of men. Fundamentalism tries to restore the statement of Orthodoxy.

The position of Fundamentalism, as outsiders remind us when the

³ Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, Book XVIII, chapter 44.

Church forgets, is either basically dishonest or palpably naive. The Reformers were neither. They did the best thinking of their age. They were men of their times; they lived before biblical criticism. Fundamentalism lives after biblical criticism, as a protest against it. It is one thing to look at a bent stick in a glass of water, which looks straight because of the water. This was the case with Orthodoxy. It is a different thing to take the stick out and see that it is bent. This was the case with Liberalism. It is a vastly different thing to plunge it back in, try to forget it was ever taken out, and say that it has always been straight. This is the case with Fundamentalism.

What we must assert unequivocally is that the Bible is *both* the word of God *and* the words of men. To say either alone is to be false to the Bible. Perhaps this combination may be clarified by looking at the nature of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The Roman Catholics assert that when the bread and wine are consecrated, the substance changes. The change of substance (transubstantiation) means that the body and blood *replace* the bread and wine; the supernatural annihilates the natural. This is what the Fundamentalists tend to hold concerning the Bible: that the word of God so transforms the words of men that the Bible is no longer a human document. On the other hand the Zwinglians said that the bread and wine only recalled to memory that which they symbolized. This is what the Liberals tend to hold concerning the Bible: that the words of men only remind us, more or less seriously, of God. To be sure, such an analogy caricatures the Roman and the Zwinglian, the Fundamentalist and the Liberal; but we are dealing with mystery. How is the Bible both the word of God and the words of men, without confusion or separation? No one can say, any more than one can say how Christ was both God and Man without confusion or separation. The mystery of revelation is derivative from the mystery of Incarnation.

Our problem is that heresy is always so much more appealingly simple than truth. The appeal of both Fundamentalism and Liberalism with regard to the Bible is that they answer nicely and neatly the questions of those who want certainty. This is acute on campuses where adolescents have outgrown the wonder of a childhood which can live with mystery and apparent contradiction. Adolescents want straightforward Yes or No answers. They have not yet come, many of them, to a maturity which can embrace paradox and mystery. Let Fundamentalists argue with Liberals until both grow to see that each is only half the story; but above all, let both come to read the Bible, not as a package of riddles, but as a letter addressed to them. The Bible is perhaps itself not when we ask questions of it but when it asks questions of us. This is not to undervalue criticism, but to put it in perspective.

What is the Bible? What is it about? What is the story it wants to tell? The first thing that strikes the reader of the Bible is its *diversity*. Here is a collection of sixty-six books. It possesses diversity as to *time*.

There is benefit to be derived from tracing the various strands and books as they were written in different times by different men under quite different circumstances. When do the prophets speak words of comfort? When the people are in despair. When do the prophets speak words of affliction? When the people are comfortable. Dare we listen to the words of comfort when we are comfortable? Which books were written under situations which somewhat parallel ours? Are there some books which should not be heard in certain times? The diversity of time reminds us that revelation is always compounded of message and situation. A second diversity is diversity of literary *form*. The Bible includes poetry, biography, historical narrative, social legislation, short stories, proverbs, and so on. Why? What are the values of the various types? Third, the Bible possesses diversity of *message*. The message of Ecclesiastes is different from the message of Job. The message of Genesis is different from the message of Isaiah. What are the reasons for the diversities?

What is the difference between the Old Testament and the New Covenant? Is the Old Testament a covenant of law and the New Testament a covenant of grace? Or is even the Decalogue set in the context of a covenant of grace? Is the Old Testament a book of unfulfilled promises, made complete only by the New? Can we read the New Testament properly without the Old Testament? These are some of the questions which arise when we begin to read the Bible. Under and beneath them is the question as to what the Bible is. Is it held together by a unity of doctrine or of story? Richard Niebuhr tells us that we should read the Bible as the story of our lives. Is there some way in which we were in the Garden of Eden, in which we crossed the Red Sea, in which we know of a covenant made, broken, and healed again in our own lives?

But if You Can't Prove It?

The tendency of academic life favors the impersonal against the personal, the abstract against the concrete, the universal against the particular. Therefore perhaps the root obstacle to any authentic Christian faith rests in its particularity. The Christian faith is committed to a God who has chosen a particular people in a particular time and place for specific tasks. The objection is that Christianity is anthropomorphic, that it makes God in the image and likeness of man. Of course all our thought is anthropomorphic. Even the word "anthropomorphic" is coined from roots in the language of a specific people at a specific time. Even mathematics, that most impersonal and refined of all thinking, is based on the ten-digit system, for the simple reason that at a particular time and in a particular place people who had ten fingers started counting on them.

All our thought is anthropomorphic. It is also anthropocentric. We judge everything in terms of ourselves. In a very profound way "Man is the measure of all things." For man! We simply cannot get outside

our own skins. We are in the anthropocentric predicament. Even our abstractions are man-made. Calvin was much aware of this when he considered that since we are men and not gods, speculation about the essence of God-in-himself is futile. We know only God-for-us. We do not know God apart from his revelation of himself. This puts us in a pickle only when we forget that even the astronomer does not know the stars-in-themselves; he knows them only in relation to human observation.

It is because we do not know God apart from his revelation that the arguments for the existence of God are futile for at least four reasons. First, they take place in the realm of the third person pronoun "it." They reduce God to the level of a thing. They succeed only in the degree to which they fail. They prove God to be neuter, which is precisely what the Christian is concerned that he shall not do. They result in the attempt to prove that God, instead of being the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is Prime Mover, Efficient Cause, Necessary Being, Highest Good, or Ground of Order. Even if these arguments succeeded, they would still leave the problem of how this Neuter is personal. Second, the arguments fail to prove that what is proved by one argument is identical with what is proved by another. For example, what are the grounds for believing that the Highest Good is the Prime Mover? Third, if these arguments are effective, why have more than one? Finally, why is it that the arguments have been effective only when they are unnecessary (for a person who already believes) and been ineffective precisely when they seem necessary (for those who do not believe)? To these reasons must be added the question, Are we interested in conversion and repentance or in persuasion and reformulation?

However, the Christian must grapple quite seriously with the obstacles to belief which are presented by various people. It is quite a different thing to discuss obstacles to belief and undercut them than it is to try to argue people into the Kingdom. The obstacles to belief in God are at least four in number. First, the belief in God is unscientific. Precisely so. So what? Students can have a good evening discussing the nonscientific aspects of life. Music is unscientific. It is not even verbal. If it were verbal, the musician would be an essayist or poet instead of a musician. Religious phenomena are within the realm of scientific investigation; the existence of God is not. The moment the scientist argues for or against the existence of God, he is not talking as a scientist. Religion is religion and not science precisely because it is unscientific.

The second obstacle to belief in God is that he must be a "protection." Since, as the argument goes, many people are dissatisfied with life as they know it, they have concocted a world of religious make-believe in which they assure themselves that there is a "big brother in the sky who looks after them." Man, therefore, so runs the argument, has made God after his own image and likeness, though larger and more powerful. There is some cogency to this argument, for the Christian faith

does use human symbols with which to describe God. In describing God as personal, the Christian is simply using the most significant terms about which he knows. Or, to put matters the other way around, God—in revealing himself—is using terms which have meaning for man. The real thrust of the “projection” argument is found in the suggestion that man creates a God to fulfill his wishes. Such a suggestion arises either from a misreading of the nature of the Christian faith or from an observation of the practices of inauthentic Christians. The authentic Christian knows a God who stands above and even against him, challenging his cherished wishes and desires. A faith which has produced martyrdom may hardly be called wish fulfillment unless Christians are to be labeled cosmic masochists. Perhaps those who call belief in God “wish fulfillment” are actually wishing that there be no God to stand over, above, and against them.

A third obstacle to belief in God is that if there is a God, he would have revealed himself more clearly. The only answer here is to ask the person to suggest a better way. Had he revealed himself to pro-Copernican scientists in Ptolemaic terms, he would be false for us and vice versa. One is reminded of the story of the bachelor who would not marry until he found the perfect woman. He found her. But she was looking for the perfect man! How can a perfect God reveal himself perfectly to imperfect people?

A fourth obstacle is the fact of strange and inexplicable evil in the world, surd evil which serves no purpose. This is perhaps the most serious objection and should be taken seriously. No pat answers will do. Perhaps, however, the question is to be answered with a question. How would you, if you were God, make a better world? How would you combine the human claims for freedom and order? Is man to be made a puppet, kept from doing wrong and from suffering the consequences of his actions? If he is not free to choose evil, how can he have freedom to choose good? Or, if a man is completely free, how can he possess such freedom without infringing upon the freedom of others? What is my good may be my brother's evil. Unless a person is prepared to offer rational alternatives to things as they are, his objections to the belief in God may very well be an excuse for either intellectual laziness or moral mediocrity. The fundamental obstacle to belief in God is man's desire to be God.

Getting the Right Ingredients

No one may presume to set up criteria for the Christian faith. Any criteria for faith come from revelation. They are ancillary to it, not prior. However, on the basis of the Christian faith, it may be possible to take three concerns which have been involved and which must be involved in any presentation of the Christian faith. These are *ultimacy*, *intimacy*, and *community*. Any presentation of the Christian faith stands

under the criterion of ultimacy. It must possess a character of rationality and meaning. Christianity either makes sense of the world or is nonsense. Part of the activity of the Christian is intellectual activity. We are to love God with our minds. This criterion of intimacy reminds us that we are to love God with our hearts. Unless the Christian faith engenders piety it is cold and impersonal. The criterion of community reminds us that we are to love God together.

The Christian faith has suffered whenever these three criteria have not been observed; it has been maimed when it did not possess these three ingredients. To stress one at the expense of the others spells one-sidedness. Ultimacy without intimacy produced the rationalism of Hegel and Orthodox Scholasticism. Intimacy without ultimacy produced the pietism of Schleiermacher and the anti-intellectualism of frontier revivalism. Community without the others produced the moralism of Ritschl and the shallowness of the Social Gospel. The three together produce thoughtful piety concerned for the neighbor.

Perhaps no person can properly blend all three. In fact, individuals may be temperamentally suited to be long on one and short on the others. Some students conceive of the Christian faith as an affair of the intellect, where one asks the right questions, hoping to get the right answers. Such students would be quite happy if all the activities of a campus group were centered around theological discussions. Other students find that such discussions leave them cold. They want to focus the activities in the directions of worship, prayer, and devotional Bible reading. Other students, meanwhile, want social activities, work projects, and crusades to better the campus. All three groups are right; but by themselves all three groups are wrong. The Christian faith demands that we share together in our activities so that we shall all through each other, with our varied temperaments and interests, grow into the full maturity of the whole of the faith.

Perhaps here lies the clue to the relation between the Christian faith and culture. The Christian lives between two demands. On the one hand, he lives holding only to Christ. On the other hand, he lives in God's world where nothing is alien to him. The attempts to solve the relationship between these two injunctions form the problem of Christianity and culture. There have been several attempts at solutions. Perhaps no solution is valid for all men in all situations, any more than a solution of the relation between rationality, piety, and morality is valid for all men. One may take the *monastic* view that rejects the world, holding only to Christ. One may take the *gentlemanly* view that all culture is somehow positively related to the gospel. Or, one may take the *military* view that the whole world is to be converted to Christ. To this issue is related the question of the Christian attitude toward fraternities and sororities. Are we to damn them as evil, praise them as good, penetrate them for good? Perhaps the solution is to be found in Calvin's

assertion that we are not to cling to the world as if it were our home nor to despise it as if it were not God's gift.

But Can We Be Really Honest?

The flavor of an academic community is professedly antithetical to commitment. In a real sense, the person who is in search of truth is lauded, but anyone who professes to have an "inside track" on knowledge is suspect. All of us are prone to weigh the evidence and shuffle the facts in order to confirm our prejudices. Max Planck was so struck with this fact when he reviewed his life that he came to the conclusion that a scientific truth triumphs because its opponents die and a new generation grows up familiar with it, and not because of its inherent verity.

Anyone who has read history with care discovers that almost every human event is subject to more than one interpretation. What caused the American Revolution? The answers are as varied as the outlook of the historians. Hidden behind every conclusion is the secret background of presuppositions which never come out in the argument but which are nonetheless there. Perhaps the Christian is not so foreign to the freedom of academic enterprise, in the degree to which he is at least willing to state openly and frankly the basis on which his ideas are colored. The person who says he has no presuppositions is either dishonest or naive. Even the view that truth will triumph in open and free encounter of ideas is neither logically nor historically verifiable.

The Christian makes at least four contributions of relevance for academic life. First, he is convinced that the use of intelligence is a sacred discipline. God calls us to use our intellects to the full extent of their capacity. Only one who takes God to be less than true can conceive that academic dishonesty is less than blasphemous. The fundamental vocation of the Christian in the academic community is to be a good scholar, brave on behalf of any and all truth. He is fearless in the face of truth because he is convinced that God is great enough to embrace all truth. Only those who suspect that their faith is false are afraid that some truth may unsettle it or unnerve their conviction.

Second, he is enough aware of the history of thought and the history of faith that he is not unduly wedded to the thought-forms of any era. The Christian can contribute to the intellectual shifts of the times because he knows that all our truths are but blurred reflections of Truth. Precisely because he knows that God is infinite does he know that all our formulations about God or anything else are finite. We see darkly through a glass; we do not yet—nor shall we ever in this life—see face to face! Therefore neither truth nor faith depends upon our formulations.

Third, the Christian can pursue the truth with sure steadiness and patient care. He is not frantically occupied to devise formulations with which to save the world because he knows that salvation is not and will

not be of his own doing. He can spurn the quick falsehood, which comes back to haunt its purveyors, in favor of the larger and longer truth which comes only in time with waiting, reflection, and slow accumulation of results. He can wrestle with fact and thought until it bless him, without the need to run off boasting of premature blessings.

Finally, the Christian stands ready in all academic life to ask that thought shall come to some result. At first glance this seems to refute the earlier point that he shall not want premature results. However, what is desired here is that the Christian shall continue to raise questions about the relevance of any discipline which does not, either in its aim or in its results, look to the final good of man in his totality. Because he will allow nothing to be final but God, and because he is convinced that God is for man, he is convinced that all the realms of cultural activity are not ends in themselves. They are *for* man. Man is the measure of culture. Only God is sovereign over man. The Christian denies the existence of all lesser deities. No discipline and no department is an end in itself.

Therefore, the Christian comes to academic life with a perspective born of the experience of Christians who have too easily identified God with some narrow falsehood and the experience of scholars who have too quickly pinned Truth to some shallow adumbration or approximation of it. He comes with a steadiness of tread which does not turn suddenly in the path of some fad or move sharply from the values of the past. He is unduly excited over neither the customs of the past nor the fashions of the future. Yet he asks that education shall not be pointless, that somehow all shall contribute to the development of men into their full stature as men under God.

Whenever the Christian Church has defined its task as being one of evangelism or proclamation of the good news, it is immediately confronted with a series of difficult questions. What is the relationship of Christianity to Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam? In what way has God "not left himself without a witness" in these world religions? How is the good news to be proclaimed within non-Christian cultures? During the great missionary movements of the last two centuries the Christian Church has had to wrestle repeatedly with these questions. Questions within and without the Church have forced the Church to offer at least tentative answers.

Answers of Secular Culture

In its attempt to answer these questions, the Church has examined and rejected two types of answers which have a somewhat popular appeal. The first type deals with the Christian faith as simply one (although perhaps the highest) of many world religions. This view holds that all religions have in some measure grasped the truth about divine things. Tolerance, for this view, is the primary virtue. It sees all religion as man's attempt to explain the ultimate mysteries of birth, life, and death. It comes to the conclusion, "We are all going to the same place but by different roads." Other popular sayings give expression to this belief. "It doesn't matter what a man believes just so long as he is sincere." "Live and let live." This view also is expressed in questions raised in campus discussion groups. "How do we know that Buddhism is not closer to the truth than Christianity?" "What right do we have to 'impose' our beliefs on other people?"

The one characteristic which stands out in all these opinions and questions is *relativism*. Most of our contemporaries find the concept of absolute truth a difficult one. They consequently tend to be suspicious of the Christian claim of a unique revelation of God in Jesus Christ. They point to the religious wars fought in the name of Christ, to the burning of witches and heretics, to the suppression of freedom of inquiry and speech all in the name of Christian truth. The non-Christian peoples cite the fact that the Western nations, the so-called Christian nations, during the first half of the century have plunged the world into the two most destructive wars in human history.

The conclusions drawn from these unpleasant facts go something like this: The Christian Church adheres to a claim of a unique revelation. The Christian Church has participated in or sanctioned many violations of human rights and human dignity. Therefore, the Christian claim to unique revelation must be rejected as one of the causes of war, division, and persecution.¹

Although this syllogism may be faulty, the facts are such that the Christian Church cannot ignore or simply explain them away. The Church must continually repent and confess its past sins lest it find itself committing others even more heinous. But too often the advocates of tolerance fail to understand that action flows out of belief. Recent history has made it abundantly clear that what we believe makes a great deal of difference in the destiny of men and nations. The creed of the Nazis demanded the extermination of six million people on racial grounds. The creed of the Communists demands that many of the values of Western civilization be violated in bringing about the Communist State. Even the most tolerant humanist must now understand that what a person or a culture holds to be true and good does affect the course of human history. Granted that men and nations do not always act according to the creeds they profess with their lips, action flows from some commitment to a set of values or person or gods. While a people may believe that it is good to love one's enemies, it may also believe that it is better to destroy the enemy before he can retaliate. While the first belief may be voiced from the pulpits, the second—although unspoken—may be the actual basis for action.²

The second view which the Church has rejected is the answer of *syncretism*. It is the answer given by religions such as Bahai and movements such as Moral Re-Armament. Syncretism is the attempt to find the best in each of the world religions or the least common denominator of all religions. The syncretist hopes that the result will be a religion which will be universal, a religion which will eventually break down the religious barriers between peoples, cultures, and nations.

The Church has rejected syncretism because it fails to take account of the uniqueness of the biblical revelation. Or to be more exact, syncretism explicitly rejects the Christian claim to unique revelation as being a claim that constitutes a barrier between peoples. To be fair to

¹ This syllogism is of the following type:

John is a Democrat (or a Republican).

John beats his wife.

Therefore, the Democratic (or Republican) philosophy must be rejected because it causes men to beat their wives.

² Perhaps the most difficult problem facing the advocate of tolerance, however, concerns the attitude toward intolerance or commitment. The advocate of tolerance, in defending tolerance, will sometimes demonstrate a commitment and an intolerance worthy of a fanatic.

the syncretistic attempt, one must candidly admit that some bloody religious battles have been fought in the name of Christ. But the questions which the religious syncretist fails to answer reveal certain "hidden theologies" within his efforts: e.g., How does one determine what should be included and excluded in a world religion? When one is trying to determine what is best, the questions arise, Best for whom? and, Best for what?

But the question which the Church would put to the syncretist (be he Christian or non-Christian) takes some such form as this: If God did not appear in Jesus Christ (as the Church has claimed for two thousand years), then by all means we will join you in your efforts to find out what is valid in all religion. But if the claim is true, and God did at this one unique point in time enter the very stuff of history as one of us in order to reconcile us to himself, wouldn't it be the greatest folly to ignore this fact? Wouldn't it be tacit blasphemy to pretend it didn't happen? Because the Church is the community which confesses its belief in Christ as Lord, it can never accept the syncretist's answer and remain faithful to its Lord. The syncretist recognizes this alternative quite clearly and is ready to dispense with the Christian's Lord.

Some Christians, unfortunately, have not seen the issue so clearly. An occasional student will suggest the syncretist's answer to the problem. Jesus put the issue quite simply: "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters" (Matt. 12:30). It should not be inferred that the Church's attitude toward other religions should be one of intolerance. Charity and forbearance (or tolerance), while not exclusively Christian virtues, are nevertheless a definite part of the Christian ethic. The Church, however, cannot give assent to the proposition "It doesn't make any difference what a man believes" and at the same time remain faithful to its Lord.

Answers of the Church

We are now to the point where we can examine some of the answers which the Church in the past has accepted, to a greater or lesser degree. How is the Christian faith related to other world religions? When the question has been asked in this way, two types of answers have been given.

The first type attempts to discover what is "valid" in other religions and to build a Christian superstructure upon this "valid" element. As the Hebrew culture prepared the Hebrews for Christ, so do Oriental and African cultures prepare the non-Caucasian people of the world for Christ. At first glance, this answer appears to satisfy (partially at least) some of the syncretist's concerns and some of the Church's concerns. The syncretist is allowed to find the good in the other religions, and the Church is able to remain faithful to the uniqueness of the biblical revelation. But actually this kind of answer satisfies neither party. It doesn't

satisfy the syncretist because there remains a claim to unique revelation which the syncretist sees as a cause of division.³ And the answer does not satisfy the Christian faith because the questions raised by Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam are not answered by Christian faith. For example, the quest for Nirvana is not satisfied by the biblical answer of eternal life, and the legalistic quest of Islam is not satisfied by justification by faith. It is, therefore, not possible to build a Christian superstructure on the other world religions, satisfy the syncretist, and simultaneously maintain the uniqueness of biblical revelation. At times the answer has been unconsciously given and the effort unconsciously made (e.g., in Western Europe during the fourth and fifth centuries, and in Latin America during the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries). The result has been a religious hodge-podge. The Greek and Roman pantheon entered the Church under other names, and pagan superstition was blessed in the name of Christ.

When we ask, "How then is the Christian faith related to other religions?" the Church has offered another type of answer. It has suggested that while there may be some truth and goodness in other religions, these pale when compared to the Christian faith. Other world religions are often treated as no more than pagan superstitions. Many congregations still sing with halfhearted conviction:

From Greenland's icy mountains,
From India's coral strand,
Where Afric's sunny fountains
Roll down their golden sand,
From many an ancient river,
From many a palmy plain,
They call us to deliver
Their land from error's chain.

Self-righteous superiority cloaked in pious humility has seldom been considered a virtue by the historic Christian Church. And lest anyone suppose that this attitude ought to be the one which the Church should hold, the study of comparative religions in recent years should make abundantly clear that the Christian Church doesn't have all the virtue or that the other world religions possess all the evil and superstition. Brilliant philosophical systems and penetrating ethical insights are the heritage of the other world religions as well as of Christianity.

The Task of the Christian Community

At this particular juncture we apparently have reached a dead end. When we ask the question of how Christian faith is related to other religions, the answers given by secular culture are unacceptable to the Church, and the answers given by the Church are unacceptable to secular

³ See Matthew 10:34-39.

culture and sometimes not even to the Church! Where, then, are we? We need to back up and ask a question from where we stand—namely, within the Christian Church. The question, then, does not concern itself with the relationship of the Christian faith to other faiths, but with the task of the Christian community which is the Church.

TO SPEAK. We ask this question from the standpoint of those who have been grasped by him who said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." We do not ask as detached intellectual observers, but as those who have been shaken by the God who is the ultimate concern of human life, the God revealed in Christ. Paul Tillich has expressed this distinction well:

There are the great religions beside Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and the remnants of classical Judaism; they have their myths and their rites—so to speak their circumcision—which gives each of them their distinction. There are the secular movements: Fascism and Communism, Secular Humanism, and Ethical Idealism. They try to avoid myths and rites; they represent, so to speak, uncircumcision. Nevertheless, they also claim ultimate truth and demand complete devotion. How shall Christianity face them? Shall Christianity tell them: Come to us, we are a better religion, our kind of circumcision or uncircumcision is higher than yours? Shall we praise Christianity, our way of life, the religious as well as the secular? Shall we make of the Christian message a success story, and tell them, like advertisers: try it with us, and you will see how important Christianity is for everybody? Some missionaries and some ministers and some Christian laymen use these methods. They show a total misunderstanding of Christianity. The apostle who was a missionary and a minister and a layman all at once says something different. He says: No particular religion matters, neither ours nor yours. But I want to tell you that something has happened that matters, something that judges you and me, your religion and my religion. A New Creation has occurred, a New Being has appeared; and we are all asked to participate in it. And so we should say to the pagans and Jews wherever we meet them: Don't compare your religion and our religion, your rites and our rites, your prophets and our prophets, your priests and our priests, the pious amongst you and the pious amongst us. All this is of no avail! And above all don't think that we want to convert you to English or American Christianity, to the religion of the Western World. We do not want to convert you to us, not even to the best of us. This would be of no avail. We want only to show you something we have seen and tell you something we have heard: That in the midst of the old creation there is a New Creation, and that this New Creation is manifest in Jesus who is called the Christ.⁴

⁴ Paul Tillich, *The New Being*, pp. 16-18. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955.

This approach to the problem does not mean that the disciplines known as philosophy of religion and history of religions are unimportant to the Christian Church. Far from it. But these disciplines, from the standpoint of Christian faith, find their true goal not in "Truth for Truth's sake," but in "Truth for God's sake." The main task of the Church is to speak of the God revealed in Christ, not in halting or stumbling phrases, but with all the wisdom and insight of which it is capable. Not only religious history and philosophy of religion, but comparative psychology, world history, history of philosophy, and every other discipline can become God-given tools with which to proclaim the good news.

TO LISTEN. In proclaiming the gospel, the Church must learn not only to speak but to listen. In speaking of the Church's task to the Islamic world, Kenneth Cragg says, "Men in these days are less and less disposed to take seriously any message that comes from outside their own cultural self-identity or which suggests any inadequacy in their would-be self-sufficiency. . . . The church needs to 'listen' its way into the consistent feel of these prejudices, and to explore the spiritual insights of Islam as the first step to the salvaging of 'the sense of the Word.'"⁵

We should also remember that the Church lives in the midst of a rapidly changing world. And while the Church's task may not change, its methods must be those which enable it to be an effective herald of the good news. Methods which worked in India one or two hundred years ago are no longer effective or relevant. And we can be sure that the best evangelistic techniques of today will probably be outmoded in ten or twenty years. This means simply that the Church not only has something to offer the world, namely, the gospel, but it also has much to learn from the world. Only if it is willing to listen and learn will it be able to witness in relevant terms to the non-Christian peoples of the world.

The Problem of Idolatry

The question discussed above is a difficult one. But an even more difficult one concerns the problem of idolatry. The current situation has been described in a previous section. No attempt, therefore, will be made to catalogue all the idols of contemporary campus culture. We must restrict ourselves to a brief outline of the nature and consequences of idolatry.

The prohibition against idolatry is summed up in the biblical injunction, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." The injunction,

⁵ From the article "The Christian Approach to Islam," *Frontier*, April, 1958, pp. 128, 130.

however, immediately raises the question, Who is the divine "Me" who gives this injunction? A simple definition of an idol is "anything which takes the place of God." But still we are left with the question, Who is God? We can answer in the propositional form of the Shorter Catechism: "God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." While this answer may have catechetical value, the New Testament answers the question not by stating a proposition, but by pointing to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ: "For in him the whole fulness of deity dwells bodily." An idol, then, is anything or anyone which calls for the allegiance or commitment belonging only to God who is revealed in Christ.

The Christian proscription against idolatry is a Hebrew legacy. The Hebraic horror of idolatry is seen in the refusal to have any sculptured or graphic images within the Temple at Jerusalem. It is seen in the Hebrew's willingness to fight the whole Seleucid army in order to defend the sanctity of the Temple and its worship. The early Christians followed their Hebrew predecessors in eschewing idolatry. Many faced torture and death rather than bow down before a graven image.

What is the basis for this almost fanatical abhorrence of idols? Many answers could be given—psychological, historical, philosophical—all partially valid. The religious answer, however, is that the abhorrence of idols is but the concomitant of the experience of God's demand for absolute allegiance ("Thou shalt have no other gods before me"). If God is the One in whom "we live and move and have our being," then the way of idolatry is in essence the way of self-destruction. If God is he to whom the nations "are like a drop from a bucket" and who is not only, as Calvin said, the "Creator of all things [but] also their governor and preserver," then to give allegiance to something less than God or to be alienated from God is both tragedy and folly. The Christian abhorrence of idolatry, however, is not due simply to a self-centered fear of destruction or meaninglessness, or to the possibility of poor accommodations in heaven or slightly worse accommodations in hell. Biblical abhorrence of idolatry is based on the experience of the love which is willing to suffer the torments of the damned ("he descended into hell") in order to rescue us from our self-estrangement, guilt, and the threat of meaninglessness. It sees idolatry as the violation of the greatest love, the best analogy of which is adultery.⁶

Unfortunately many Protestants think of idolatry only in terms of the plaster statues which line the nave of a Roman Catholic cathedral. If religion is defined, however, as "ultimate concern" (Tillich), then man's supreme devotion to anything less than God becomes idolatry. Idolatry takes many more subtle forms than veneration of "graven images" or plaster saints. It can take the form of dedication to a cause, whether it be nationalism, internationalism, vegetarianism, or prohibi-

⁶ See Hosea 1-3.

tion. It can take the form of commitment to an ideology or to a value system. Again it can take the form of dedication to a group or organization which is usually "my group" against "other groups." The group, whether it be the school, the gang, the family, the nation, the union, the corporation, the fraternity, or the institutional church, often demands the kind of loyalty, dedication, and commitment to its goals which are little short of idolatrous. The individual will sometimes yield to group pressure in order to keep his job, to avoid ostracism, or simply "to be well liked." He may yield to the pressure for ideological conformity because such conformity appears to offer a system of meaning which makes life worthwhile.

In some cultures and in some periods of history, the state or the family or the economy has claimed the complete and subservient loyalty of vast groups. In such cases there is no question that the individual's religious energy is being directed toward objects which are not usually considered sacred or holy.⁷

From the biblical perspective even "respectable" religion can be idolatrous.⁸ Today such an idea is not particularly widespread. We live in a culture which presumes that religion is in itself a good thing. Criticism of religion is often looked upon as bigotry or intolerance or even blasphemy. In order to understand more fully the implications of idolatry from the biblical standpoint, we need to examine the way in which the Bible understands God. It is to that study that we now turn.

⁷ John R. Everett, *Religion in Human Experience*, p. 42. New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1950.

⁸ See the book of Amos.

"All Christian doctrines," commented John Whale, "are the same doctrine, the doctrine of God."¹ We might say, "All Christian heresies are the same heresy, that of misunderstanding our relationship to God." Now this might seem to be a pretentious claim, for ours is an age when the classical assumptions of the Western tradition have been called into question. We are skeptical of many things, not the least of which is the possibility of "taking thought" about God. Yet it is in just such a time that the Christian Church is undergoing a profound rediscovery of its deepest roots in biblical faith, and it is from the perspective of this rediscovery that we are compelled to say that our knowledge of God and our self-understanding are inextricably related. Nevertheless it is a surprise, even to the committed Christian, to be confronted with the assertion that an adequate understanding of our human experience is rooted in an adequate understanding of our relationship to God. It is a further surprise that this is found in turn to depend upon our participation in the recovery of the biblical faith concerning God and how he works among us.

Difficulties in Communicating the Biblical Faith

We cannot underestimate the barriers to communication which exist between the common mind-set toward theology in our culture and the basic perspectives of the biblical understanding of God and the world. The theologically sophisticated are aware that the assumptions of classical Western thought are rooted in an essentially Greek heritage. This heritage has, at some points, provided us with a dubious framework within which to grasp the significance of the biblical record. Yet everyday we find ourselves involved in conversations with students and faculty who, whenever they raise religious questions, do so from a point of reference very different from our own. Some of the time it is from the perspective of a sophisticated reductionist-empiricism, at others from an inadequately examined and highly romantic rationalism. To such individuals the claim that *God is the central human problem* is at best an enigma. For them, interest in theology is optional, an activity which is the esoteric enterprise of those few individuals whose penchant for

¹ John Whale, *Christian Doctrine*, p. 14. London: Cambridge University Press.

"mystical" experience is greater than their own. This means that while there is much ferment within the university community on the basic issues of our day, we Christians have as yet failed to engage meaningfully in this dialogue. Indeed we have our work cut out for us if we are to justify the claim that the resurgence of biblical theology springs, not from a flight into the irrational on the part of those for whom conversation about God is a vested interest, but rather from the recovery of our own deepest self-identity and *raison d'être*.

Our situation is a curious one. We must say intelligibly what we mean by biblical faith and the biblical perspective. Yet the categories of modern intellectual life with which we must deal are not derived from, and are even frequently opposed to, the biblical perspective. We must define our position in relation to and over against pragmatism, empiricism, logical positivism, existentialism, and all the other intellectual pigeonholes. As Christians we should be the first to recognize that "all labels are libels." Premature identification or cavalier rejection of these positions are equally fallacious alternatives. We are called upon to translate the language of biblical faith into meaningful contemporary symbols because biblical faith is *not* rigid doctrine. Nor is it a special branch of human knowledge which gives us a superior academic perspective. Biblical faith is, rather, a way of putting our existence together in relationship to God who is ever present and active in the whole fabric of our individual and corporate experience. Yet the basic vocabulary which has been the vehicle of communication throughout the Church's history—"god," "salvation," "revelation," "justification," "sanctification"—is freighted with connotations which we do not, or ought not, intend!

For this reason, if for no other, it is incumbent upon those of us within the campus Christian community to rethink our total understanding of the traditional Christian claim which rests upon a *particular* understanding of God and his relationship to us. Until we do, the basic issues concerning our purpose will remain obscure, and we shall continue to fumble with neither clarity nor insight. Nor ought we to assume that the discipline of re-examination will be a merely academic one. The rediscovery of biblical faith requires not the appropriation of a new set of propositions but the reconstruction and reorientation of corporate and individual existence vis-à-vis the living God. As we shall indicate, the recovery of the biblical understanding of God must, by the very nature of that recovery, involve us in a total experience of the renewal of our communal and personal life.

Then, too, we must face the fact that apart from intensive and honest wrestling with the biblical materials themselves, any attempt to explicate the "biblical view of God" will be hollow and aridly academic. Here

at best we can only lift up a few central insights concerning biblical faith in God.

Biblical Insights About Faith

KNOWING GOD VS. KNOWING ABOUT GOD. It has been pointed out that from the biblical perspective the problem of *knowledge about* God is a very different one from that of *knowing God*.² The creeds begin, "I believe *in* God the Father . . .," not "I believe *that* . . ." To seek knowledge about God as we seek knowledge about all else assumes that God is a being or thing like other beings or things. This the biblical perspective leads us to deny. To raise the question in this way is to deal with the problem ontologically. Whether this is a particularly fruitful avenue of approach is the subject of much debate in theological circles. Certainly it can be dealt with in other terms. But to pursue the ontological approach, the perspective of biblical faith is that God cannot be understood as *a* being or *a* thing, but rather, in Tillich's terminology, as "the Ground of Being" in whom everything else is rooted. Consequently we must assume that when we are concerned primarily with *knowing about* God the Hebraic-Christian tradition will be of little help to us. The question of the possibility of holding knowledge *about* God has been a perennial issue in Western thought, one which is often answered nowadays in the negative. But it is *not* the central biblical concern. The biblical position assumes that man *knows* or can know God and this by virtue of the fact that God *reveals* himself to us in the manner which is somewhat analagous to the way in which we as persons reveal ourselves to each other, namely through *what we do*. We shall have more to say concerning this later. Here it is sufficient to point out that this is best described as Person revealing himself to persons. The content of the revelation is *not* a set of propositions *about* God to be memorized and digested. The *content* of revelation is *God himself*. It is possible and, in fact, necessary to say something about God's activity propositionally, and these propositions may be said to be more or less adequate in conveying what we mean about God. However, we have ceased to be faithful to our biblical heritage whenever we permit any theological conversation to become a battleground for conflicting propositions about God. Participating in such discussion may be an interesting armchair exercise or intellectual puzzle. But in the light of biblical faith it is, at best, irrelevant. At its worst, it is a subtle escape from getting on with the frequently confusing task of being obedient in God's world.

The primary problem we face is not, What true propositions about God can I put together? It is the question, What is God doing and how is he working among us, and what does this imply for my life? It is

² For further treatment of this problem see Chapter III, "The Nature of Faith."

through his activity and the way of his working that we know him and, if at all, know about him. Biblical faith rests upon the assumption that knowing God is a response to what God is doing and what he intends in his relationship to us. To glimpse this, or more properly, to be grasped by it, is all that is required for the living of these difficult days.

REVELATION IN ACTION VS. FALSE SPIRITUALITY. Before we turn to the question of God's gracious self-revelation, or what has been called his "proper work," it is important to remember that the biblical perspective requires us to re-examine many of the assumptions about "religion" which we share in our culture. On the basis of what we have said about the centrality of God's activity in biblical faith, it should be clear that biblical religion is integrally activist and dynamic rather than passive and "spiritual" in the common, non-Christian sense of that term. Biblical faith rests on an interpretation of all reality, including personal experience, which is immediate and concrete. The spiritual pilgrimage has to do not with an ethereal experiencing of the "real" world beneath "apparent," everyday life. It has to do rather with the concrete and immediate totality which is the one and only order of reality. The Bible knows nothing of the countless dualities which we find necessary to introduce into life. The practical vs. the theoretical, the emotions vs. the intellect, word vs. deed, religious vs. secular, individual vs. collective—these are unknown to the biblical mind. If we would stand where the biblical writers stand, we must see life whole, knowing that to "spiritualize" the biblical message is to distort it. There is truth in the contention that "the characteristic heresy of modern Christianity, whether liberal or orthodox or neo-orthodox, is the false spirituality of its message and life."³ And we can be certain that this particular heresy will become more subtly tempting in a culture which is basically perplexed about the conditions of existence. For one reason or another, the numbers of adherents to the Oriental religions are likely to multiply phenomenally on our university campuses in the years ahead. Furthermore, the college community is unlikely to want to face any Christian claim which will not set well amidst these growing syncretistic enthusiasms.

However this may be, we are the heirs of a way of looking at life which, at its most profound level, finds no need for experience-bifurcating categorizations to deal with the basic questions of life. In the Bible the life-and-death issues for man are presented in the ongoing drama in which God and man are the chief participants. The focus of attention is not a special spiritual order above and beyond the secular, but is on the events which make up the continuing fabric of human experience. History, the totality of the human struggle, is the stage upon which the

³ Amos Wilder, *Otherworldliness and the New Testament*, p. 20. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954.

divine-human drama is constantly going on. "The decisive word-form in the language of the Bible is not the substantive, as in Greek, but the verb, the word of action. . . . God 'steps' into the world, into relation with men. . . . He acts always in relation *to them*, and He always *acts*."⁴ So strong is the Hebraic sense of the unity of experience that the Hebrew verb-form "dabar" can be used contextually to mean both "act" and "word." God acts and speaks and it is the same! When the Hebrew wanted to *confess* his faith, he did not verbalize a set of propositions about God. He told a story, affirmed an act (i.e., a word) of God operative in his history and the history of his people. "A wandering Aramean was my father; and he went down into Egypt and sojourned there . . . we cried to the LORD the God of our fathers . . . and the LORD brought us out of Egypt . . . he brought us into this place and gave us this land . . . flowing with milk and honey" (Deut. 26:5-9). When the Jew prayed he raised up particular deeds of the Lord God in which he rejoiced: "Thou art the LORD, the God who didst choose Abram and bring him forth . . . and give him the name Abraham; and thou didst find his heart faithful before thee, and didst make with him the covenant . . ." (Neh. 9:7-8). When a biblical leader exhorted his people to be faithful to their true identity, he reminded them of what God had done: "And Samuel said to all Israel, ' . . . stand still, that I may plead with you before the LORD concerning all the saving deeds of the LORD which he performed for you and for your fathers' " (1 Sam. 12:1, 7).

We will have more to say later about the implications of this conception of revelation in action. First we must explore further the divergence of this position from the commonly held notions which underlie most affirmations and critiques of religion with which we come into contact.

The Biblical Understanding of God

GOD THE CREATOR. Most of us with even a minimal background in the Bible are aware that this complex and varied document begins with a narrative concerning the creation. (If we read more carefully we discover that there are two different narratives.) It is, of course, no accident that the redactors of the Hexateuch, in bringing together the cherished writings of Israel, began with the Hebraic versions of the creation myths⁵ as we have them in Genesis. Nor is their place of prominence due merely to the need of a primitive people to have an explanation for phenomena which their cultural backwardness prevented them from accounting for in more adequate fashion! However, it can be

⁴ From *The Divine-Human Encounter* by Emil Brunner. Copyright, 1943, by The Westminster Press. Used by permission.

⁵ The word "myth" is to be understood here in the sense in which it is used in German theology as the attempt to set forth in story form the supra-historical element in events which can never be fully described in our human categories.

argued that the position of the creation stories has often misled the Church in its efforts to understand the basis of its faith. It is not surprising that the apologists for the faith, in some periods, have assumed that the proper place to set out on the pilgrimage to the divine-human encounter was the starry sky and the glories of the created order.

Natural theology began not with the revelation of God to his people, but with the area of universal human experience of nature. God was to be perceived in the glowing sunset or quiet lakeside, and this seemed to find support in the biblical starting point. Such attempts at broadening the base of Christian epistemology failed with the inability of those who were totally outside the biblical perspective to perceive anything but a glowing sunset, accountable on the basis of the refraction of light waves in the atmosphere. To be sure, the Hebraic-biblical faith rests squarely on the conviction that God is Creator. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" carries the clear implication that everything is contingent upon God and has its origin in him. But the Israelite did not first discover that God is Creator and then deduce relationship to him from this fact. Rather, he encountered God in the socio-historical fabric of communal life, in the "concrete historical circumstances and in men's perennial task of living with one another."⁶ In the light of this encounter the creation myths (originally the common possession of most Semitic tribes) were transformed and reworked. They were added as a prologue to the drama which the Hexateuch records through history, myth, legend, and law—the drama which forms the framework of the Old Testament.

If the creation myths are not to be understood as a starting point for biblical epistemology, it is important that we take seriously what they do seek to convey within the context of this literature. On the one hand, it is clear that the intention of the narrative is to affirm the reality of the created order. Nature and time are real; they are not illusion. Furthermore, their coming into being is ethically positive. "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good." We are not the victims of a malicious joke on the part of an unconcerned cosmic deity. Life as it is given to us is the gift of benevolence from One who intends our good. This fact in no way diminishes the biblical realism concerning the rebelliousness of creation, but it sets the problem in a reality-affirming rather than a reality-negating context! It places the question of God's relationship to man in a "this-worldly" framework which undercuts any tendency to construe God's intent for us as "redemption from life" rather than "redemption to life."

On the other hand, the creation story clearly implies that while the creation is real, the work of the living God, it is not ultimate or self-subsistent. *Nothing* is eternal save God himself. At first glance, there

⁶ Amos Wilder, *New Testament Faith for Today*, p. 21. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1955.

may seem little that is debatable in this position, but it involves a firm denial of at least two widely held views concerning the nature of things. We have already alluded to one of these views: the belief that there is a disjuncture between the "apparent" world and the "realm of the spirit." Hebraism rejects this view. We must always bear in mind that *both* matter and spirit are finite and contingent. *Both* are realms of God's activity, but *both* are capable of standing in perverted relationship to him.

It is especially important to emphasize this truth in a culture which is undergoing a revival of interest in religion. From the standpoint of biblical faith, there is nothing necessarily holy about religion. Biblically speaking, true piety consists in the service of God and not in any form of religiosity. Israel knew much about religion, but the greatest part of the Old Testament literature, the prophetic writings, is largely a protest against the "religion" of the Israelites made on behalf of the Lord God. God's claim upon his people is eluded precisely through a form of piety which manages to ignore the one thing needful. The term "religion" is all but unknown in biblical language, and when it is used the referent is generally the cultic practice of the worshiping community. It is the religion of the "false gods" through which men take refuge from the Lord God, and the idolatries of the pious are no less offensive than those of the impious.

God simply does not relate himself to his creation in terms of "religion," but rather in terms of "life." Nothing in life is irrelevant and nothing superfluous to the man of faith. Yet how much of our life as Christian communities on the campus or in the local parish belies this fact! We seek to find God and serve him through patterns of Christian life which deny the radical claim of God's creative sovereignty over all his creation. Have we any right to be surprised when the most sensitive spirits in our universities simply reject our domesticated versions of the "good news" and get on with more important matters?

The other alternative rejected in the biblical affirmations concerning creation is the one which contends that nature itself is eternal, or that the concept of eternity is meaningless. In this view nature is supposedly explicable within itself, and it is unnecessary (even undesirable) to talk about Something or Someone who transcends the order of nature. It is this latter view which underlies the assumptions of a great many within the academic community who have self-consciously rejected Christian faith as a viable option. The confusion of these individuals concerning what biblical faith involves is compounded by the obvious fact that the world-view of the biblical writers is quite different from that which an educated individual can hold in our own time. We ought not to ignore the real problem which exists here. The Israelite of the eighth century B.C. and the Christian of the first century A.D. conceived of nature as a simple, three-story affair. While the claim that God stands

over and beyond all this as transcendent may have challenged the poetic capacity of the biblical mind, it was by no means the imagination-staggering assertion which it is to the twentieth-century mind. It *is* difficult to know what we mean when we say that God transcends nature, particularly nature as we know it through the empirical sciences. Then, too, the Christian is faced with the necessity of relating God's transcendence, his "otherness" and "over-againstness," to the biblical insistence that God is actively present within nature as actor.

GOD'S TRANSCENDENCE AND IMMANENCE. Within the Church this question has been dealt with as the transcendence-immanence debate. How, it is asked, is the sovereignty of God over the finite order to be related to his creative and active presence within it? This is a genuine problem although much of the verbiage spent upon it has rested upon a faulty understanding of the basic issues involved. The failure of the fundamentalist to face the more than semantic problem of the nature of theological language has resulted in the continuing tendency among biblical literalists to interpret transcendence and immanence in a very naive spatial sense. God is said to be "above" (transcendent), so the problem becomes one of attempting to interpret God's immanence within his creation. Usually the best that can be done when the problem is expressed in this way is to describe God's intervention in terms of certain special excursions into nature. God's action thus becomes wholly discontinuous with the order of nature as it is normally experienced. The limitations of this sort of supernaturalism are legion and obvious. The inability of the proponent of this position to grasp the poetic-dramatic character of mythological language ends in the virtual exclusion of God from his creation and the reduction of his activity to certain perpendicular entrances into the cosmos in order to reveal his existence in heaven. This places the appeal to faith upon the believer's ability to accept certain particular instances of God's miraculous working. One is, therefore, left with a static understanding of God which ignores the biblical emphasis upon his dynamic and continuing involvement in his creation.

As we have said, this tendency to construe biblical meanings into spatial categories arises from a literalism which tries to reduce qualitative meanings expressed in dramatic language to quantitative formulae. Treating the creation narratives in this way leads to especially mischievous results quite contrary to the biblical intention. Creation, in the biblical sense, cannot be reduced to a point on a historical time-line which is "back there." The creation story is as fully descriptive of the present, and God's activity in the present moment, as it is of every other moment, past, present, and future. God has created, to be sure, but he is creating now. His activity is in the past, but equally in the present and the future.

It is not only the literalist within the Church who has made the error of reducing myth to a quantitative dimensional category. There are also those liberals who have attempted to solve the problem by reinterpreting biblical meanings literally within *contemporary* space-time categories. The result has been that transcendence has had to be rejected as a legitimate theological concept. The early decades of this century saw the emergence of numerous versions of completely immanent interpretations of the doctrine of God. Its most sophisticated form has been found among those religious naturalists who, impressed with the claim that man can only understand reality as one continuous order of being, attempted to "save" belief in God by rejecting the transcendence of God on the grounds of modern scientific conclusions. For them "God" appropriately designates Something or Someone wholly within the one order of nature. Valiant as the efforts to set forth such an intellectually tenable Christian apologetic have been, the "nontheistic" naturalists have no more often been converted by theistic naturalists than by supernaturalists.

The truth of the matter is that the difficulties of relating a biblical understanding of God to twentieth-century cosmologies has not been solved by this approach to the problem. Religious naturalism has a tendency to move in one of two directions. Either it tends to a violently nonbiblical deification of nature as all that is and a consequent flirtation with pantheism, or it leads to the denial of what the position intends through the positing of some point at which all the manifestations of God are one and hence "transcend" nature. Ironically, the only theological alternative to either transcendence or pantheism would appear to be a polytheism. For if God is not all that is, but manifests himself within all that is, how can we assume that this is one God and not many unless we admit some point of unity which transcends every specific manifestation of the divine?

It is interesting to note the rapidity with which the transcendence-immanence controversy has slipped into the background with the resurgence of biblical theology. It may be that the primary controversies concerning the doctrine of God in any particular era are determined by the apparent tensions between Christian faith and the prevailing philosophical schools. Naturalism, with what seemed difficult epistemological problems, is not so militant as it once was. In keeping with a more "existential" philosophical climate we have discovered that the biblical understanding of God involves meanings which we cannot summarily dismiss simply because we cannot square them with our present scientific space-time perspectives. We must at least insist that theological terms such as "transcendence" involve *meanings* which are essential to an adequate formulation of our faith. To say that God is transcendent means, among other things, that he is One, present in and through his creation but separate from it, so that no particular part of it is to be

confused with the divine. It is precisely because God is "other" than his creation that he is related to it totally.

If we disavow the meaningfulness of transcendence in favor of a theology of immanence we are forced to deify some aspects of experience and reject others as being incapable of serving as channels of God's revelation.⁷ All the biblical affirmations about God—that he is holy, just, righteous, loving—rest upon the conviction of his sovereignty, i.e., transcendence. We may not be able to construe transcendence in a spatial sense, but we can understand what we *mean* when we refer to this particular relationship between God and creation. And, perhaps more important, we can understand what alternatives are denied by this position.

GOD'S PARTICULARISM. We have said much about the Bible's view of God's activity in history and something about the relationship of this perspective to other alternative approaches to the problem of revelation. At this point one may well ask how all that has been said about the biblical framework concerning the cosmic drama relates to the specifics of the biblical narrative. For clearly the central concern of the biblical literature is not human history in its totality, but the corporate experience of a relatively insignificant group of Semites who figured very little in the actual power structures which shaped the world of their contemporaries. Yet it is precisely the tension between Israel's history, objectively considered, and the history of Israel's faith which provides the key to a further grasp of the issue involved.

The aspirations of the Hebrews as a state were not greatly different from those of any national group. They looked to history, and hence to their God as the Lord of history, to bring them power and status among the competing nations around them. They sought security from the dangers that threatened them. Like any heterogeneous community struggling for unity and seeking security from external threats, the Hebrew community experienced its fair share of internal dissension and intrigue. The historical sections of the Old Testament include candid references to many of these. But the basic internal tension did not arise from the issues which divided the northern tribes from the southern, or the "royalists" from the prophetic groups. These were but symptomatic. Underlying them was the primary issue of God's purpose in history and the implications of it for the Hebrews.

We cannot ignore the fact that the biblical writers give differing answers to the question of God's purpose. In part, this can be explained because they spoke to widely divergent historical situations, and in part because they grasped the central problem of their people in relation to

⁷ There is probably some correlation between the penchant of naturalists, religious and otherwise, in the field of education to see education as participation in certain kinds of "essential" activity and to be highly positive about which experiences are desirable and which undesirable for fruitful living.

God differently. For some there was no problem at all. The Lord was Israel's God and hence he could be relied upon to vindicate the nation in its struggle for power and security. There is much in the Old Testament which can be read as nationalistic piety of the common garden variety. There is much that shows the equation of Hebrew national aspirations and God's will.

But the Hebrew experience had within it the seeds of a mighty protest against this type of conviction, typical though it be of much religion. The very conception of God as sovereign Lord of history gave Israel's faith a majestic quality arising from the awfulness of One who is in, through, and beyond all creation. This overriding conception of the holiness of God militated strongly against a too simple equation between the ends of the Hebrew nation and God's purposes in history. The obscure origins of Israel, and the way in which God acted to call the nation into being, constantly prodded the Israelite to turn his eyes away from an arid national piety to a deeper comprehension of the meaning of his existence.

GOD'S COVENANT. Before we discuss the resolution of this tension, either in terms of the Old Testament or the New, it is important to remind ourselves of the concrete experiences through which Israel interpreted God's activity. Even with the occasional stress on Israel's privileged position, the great burden of emphasis rested upon the *graciousness* of God in entering into relationship (covenant) with his people. Contemporary scholarship has revealed that the conception of a covenant between tribe and deity was a common one among the people of the Fertile Crescent.⁸ Here we have another instance in which the Hebrews took a commonly held religious symbol and transformed it in the light of their encounter with Yahweh. To the Israelite, the covenant was not a simple contract, capable of being dissolved by either party if the conditions of agreement were not fulfilled. The covenant between the Lord God and Israel was of a different sort. From the perspective of this deeply embedded faith, the Israelite knew that God had *chosen* to bring Israel into existence. The very fact that Israel could enter into a covenant at all depended upon God's prior graciousness in constituting this people. Israel's very existence was a miracle. A group of suffering slaves after decades of bondage in Egypt and through years of wandering in the wilderness perceived that their experience was part of a divinely ordained pattern. For no apparent reason God called them to face the future under his steadfast direction.

This was the way in which the Israelite read his history. Israel was "God's people," "the summoned of Yahweh."⁹ Two things stand out

⁸ George Mendenhall, *Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, pp. 35ff. Biblical Colloquium, 1955.

⁹ The name the people took implies this; "Israel" means "God rules."

here. First, the emphasis is upon God's free, unsolicited initiative in constituting this people; second, God's initiative is understood as effective not primarily toward an individual but toward a community. Here man's relationship to God takes on a structure new to Semitic religion. Historical events experienced by all the members of the community become decisive for the knowledge of God rather than the private experiences of a particular person.

In tracing through scripture the various instances of covenants made between Yahweh and Israel, we see varying interpretations, but always a stress upon God's action as the basis for the people's covenanting with him.¹⁰ Whereas most covenants characteristic of the ancient Near East emphasized the obligation of the second party to obey the first, or bound both in mutual obligation, the Berith Yahweh, Israel's covenant, was interpreted in the light of God's having already certified his faithfulness in the Exodus and the conquest of the Holy Land. "I shall be your God and you shall be my people" was not the lightly proffered shibboleth of a tribal deity, but the affirmation of One whose continued faithfulness could be traced through the very origin of the community, and further, to the origin of all that is.

That unique dimension of "covenant" in the biblical record points up the way in which everything Israel said about its Lord was drawn from the fact of his prior activity in choosing and guiding Israel. God was "steadfast"—no adjective is more characteristic of the Hebraic profession of faith. Unlike the Hellenist who might *first* seek to define steadfastness or righteousness in propositional form and then ask if it is true to say that God is righteous and steadfast, the Hebrew encountered the Lord God and then affirmed that righteousness and steadfastness were to be understood as what God is and how he acts. Biblically, man's righteousness is not his adherence to a pattern defined apart from God's activity, though the temptation to this type of moralism was powerfully present here as in any religious community. The term is used within the biblical faith to designate the man who is faithful to the fact of God's faithfulness. In the Old Testament the Law was the spelling out of the way in which the community could respond to God's initiative. It is a covenant ethic, the way in which the Israelite could express his gratitude for what God had already done for his people. The reduction of the law to a rigid and uncreative collection of minute prohibitions and obligations was the result of Israel's unfaithfulness, not the cause of her inadequate understanding of God, as many Christians have been led to believe.

Though, as we have said, there were many Israelites who were anxious to reduce the covenant to an apologia for Israel's privilege, there always remained a prophetic line of those who grasped the conditions of

¹⁰ Cf. Genesis 15 and 17; Joshua 24; Exodus 19.

the covenant as God's summons to Israel to become a partner with him in his purposes for the world. This consciousness of Israel as a people with a mission under God is variously conceived and expressed in the Old Testament. But from the earliest tradition underlying the Hexateuch there comes the affirmation to Abraham that "I will make of you a great nation . . . and by you all the families of the earth will bless themselves" (Gen. 12:2-3). If "choosing" and "acting" were the means by which God revealed himself, so too choosing and acting were the means by which God's people responded faithfully to him. Israel was faithful and righteous only when she was expressing in her life what it means to have creaturely existence under the conditions of the sovereignty of God.

The biblical record makes it clear that the community is faithful not on the basis of the religious experiences it has or does not have, but on the grounds of the decisions which it makes or does not make in the course of its life! From cover to cover the Bible records instance after instance in which the demand to decide is placed upon the community or upon individuals within the community. "Choose you this day whom ye will serve" is written large across the biblical story, not as a pious exercise, but as the expression of the basic dimension which underlies life at every point. Within this framework we can describe man's unique capacity in terms of his being an animal who makes decisions and who through his decisions confesses his faith, i.e., reveals what he truly loves.

GOD'S JUDGMENT AND LOVE. The continuing steadfastness of God in the face of Israel's continued apostasy forms the necessary context for grasping the often-misunderstood biblical conception of the judgment of God. Here God's judgment is forthrightly understood as an aspect of God's love. Such a conception is inexplicable to the casual bystander conditioned by contemporary sentimentalities concerning the meaning of love. Israel knew better. The ultimate expression of God's love was his call to the community to participate with him in creation and redemption. To withdraw his call would be to withdraw his love, and he did not abandon them. As partners in God's work, the people of Israel were called upon to manifest a unique responsibility and consequently a unique kind of existence within the community of nations. In rejecting this heritage and seeking to live as though this responsibility were not hers, Israel was subject to the same fate as any other limited nation-state which overestimates its own virtue and underestimates the capacities of its adversaries. It is for this reason that the judgment of God is an ineradicable aspect of biblical faith. The referent here is not the capricious and vindictive action of the deity, but the consequence of repudiating the responsibilities of a vocation proffered by God in his graciousness. "The wrath of God," said W. H. Auden, "is not *his*

wrath but the way in which those feel his love who refuse it. . . ."¹¹

To reject the love of God in biblical terms is to seek to escape from life on the terms which God offers, i.e., participation with him in the creation and redemption of the common life of men. This calling is not an easy one for the community—it involves no special status and no assurance of blessedness in any terms which the world understands. It involves the responsibility to be faithful in a creation where disbelief seems often the easier way. It is precisely because God's call is so often rejected in Israel's life that the judgment of God is deeply understood, not primarily in a punitive sense, but as an aspect of God's faithfulness in offering another opportunity to restore the relationship of vocation violated from the human side.

GOD'S CHRIST: THE FULFILMENT OF ISRAEL. Though the foregoing discussion has been set largely within the context of an understanding of the community of Israel in the Old Testament, all of this forms the framework through which the New Testament proclaims the faith of the Church. The early Christians did not repudiate the central aspirations of Israel. Rather they saw in the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus the event toward which all the other events of Israel's history had been moving. They believed that they were living "in the fulness of time" when the activity of God, graciously expressed in the past, took on a radically new form. Here was the occurrence towards which God's involvement in history, the *Heilsgeschichte*, "salvation history," had been pointing. The entrance of the Christ was at the same time God's ultimate act of self-giving and his final word of judgment.

The New Testament proclaims the fulfilment of the old Israel's vocation, not because Israel had been faithful, but because God had taken upon himself the "form of a servant" and had himself fulfilled the calling. The act which revealed the incredible dimensions of God's love also revealed the faithlessness of the community in its most radical dimension. The Resurrection faith proclaims that man's ultimate act of rebellion is overcome at great price through the suffering love of God incarnate. ". . . all coheres in him," said Paul, and he was but confessing with the new community that the coming of this One among them had ushered in the key act of the divine-human drama. Here is the clue to the meaning of human history—the center of all life's meaning. The new community is new precisely because the mission of the old is fulfilled by God himself. Henceforth the mission or calling of God's people would be set within the context of God's victory already achieved. The fulfilment of the old was the birth of the new. The character and mission of the New Israel was far more universal in scope than the old had been. "Into all the world" and "I will go before you" provided a commission which

¹¹ W. H. Auden, "Charles Williams, A Review Article" in *The Christian Century*, May 2, 1956, p. 553.

had been only faintly imagined by even the most prophetic of the old community.

It is important for us as Christians to reappropriate the context in which Jesus was received by the early Christian community. Most individuals in our culture find it difficult to grasp the significance of the testimony of the New Testament that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself." This is precisely because they have never encountered the biblical way of understanding the divine-human dimension of life. Hence the claim of the Incarnation is for them a basically incomprehensible assertion. Having already decided that God is thus and so (i.e., he is to be defined by this proposition or that), they find the Christian claim to be a sort of metaphysical jigsaw puzzle which can be pieced together only by those who have a will to believe which they do not share. As a consequence, most discussions about the meaning of Christ involve issues which are not germane to what the gospel really proclaims. The character of theology, Christian or otherwise, is such that the questions which we ask are also *confessions* concerning the kind of god we already serve.

In the campus ministry, or elsewhere, when we come across persons who are anxious to talk about theological questions but unwilling to involve themselves seriously in a community of study and worship, we have little or no reason to expect that they can discover the full dimensions of the meaning of the gospel. The "offense" of the Christian message arises not, as we often suppose, from the difficulty of appropriating intellectually the propositions which the Church teaches, but from the difficulty of giving up our gods and hence of permitting our lives to be altered. Jesus was a threat to the first-century Hebrew community because his total life was a resounding challenge to the whole meaning and structure through which they interpreted their lives. The confession of a handful of men and women that Jesus was the *logos*, the creative Word dwelling among them, was no mean claim for first-century Israelites. It was based upon an encounter which transformed them. But as the constant references to the Old Testament in the New Testament make clear, it was not the denial of their heritage, but the fulfilment of it in a quite unexpected way. Not that the early Christians grasped immediately the totality of the newness of what God was doing in Christ—the events and experiences which followed upon their "ingrafting" into the new community were surprising to them. Peter did not know that in his meeting with Cornelius, God's work in Christ would push him beyond the boundaries of his previous experience, revealing new and as yet undreamed-of dimensions of God's work in the whole world. As has been pointed out, the conversion of Cornelius was also the conversion of Peter. So too, the conversion of Paul was in a real sense the conversion of the whole Body of Christ. Armed with the awareness of God's presence in Christ at work in the world, the Christian community was able to

move out into new situations, became capable of responding to new possibilities and opportunities, and began to fulfil the purpose of his Body.

The Renewal of the Church

The character of the Church is given to it, determined not by its own whims but by the nature of God's work in the world. The recovery of a biblical understanding of God and the recovery of Christian community are *one and the same thing*. We must become people for whom questions of God are also questions of ourselves. Until this is so, no amount of correct theological analysis will help us. So much of the life of the "Christian institutions" in our culture is totally oblivious to these conditions of Christian existence that we can only hope for renewal if we will submit to a total and radical reconstruction of our life together.

It should be apparent that if this is to happen "study" must find an entirely new place in the Christian community. Just as worship must again become the point in our lives where we remind each other that we are not God and gratefully acknowledge together who he is, so study must cease to be casual manipulation of ideas and word symbols. It must become the point in our life where together we re-examine who we are and what we are called to do in response to what God is doing among us. When this happens we will turn to the Bible not as a pious exercise but rather out of a need to understand the conditions and meaning of our very being.

In our campus Christian life we will probably discover that we are paradoxically aided and handicapped in such efforts by our situation. On the one hand, we are placed within a community where re-examination and reconstruction are always going on, and we will be working with those who are open to such anxiety-producing experiences. On the other hand, we must be aware that a community which exists to put *true propositions* together can use its vocation as a shield from the necessity of facing the conditions of putting *existence* together. The conditions of our "new humanity" under the gospel—repentance and response—are not easy to manifest if we are overly satisfied about the way in which we can assemble symbols. Fortunately "our history," i.e., biblical faith, makes us aware at the outset that peril and opportunity will always be parallel sides of the same straight and narrow way.

In this context the questions which have usually plagued us regarding belief in God are seen to be largely irrelevant. How is it that I am a believer and another is not? This is an unanswerable question, and it bothers us most precisely when we are least believing in the biblical sense, because here "unbelief" consists of rejecting the vocation which God extends to us. "Not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord' . . . but he who does the will of my Father . . ." (Matt. 7:21). When we are caught up in the struggle to grasp what God is doing and become deeply involved in the task of responding to his vocation for us, we will find

ourselves getting on with the role which is really ours—that of being God's responding, responsible people "in but not of the world," accepting the perplexities of this life, but free to live without concern for self-justification, rationalization, or pretentious piety.

"Why was I born?" is the well-nigh universal question. Although it may not always be asked explicitly and in exactly these words, every so-called philosophy of life offers some answer to this question. That the question should be asked so universally implies that it is a fundamental question. The question may be asked in one of the embarrassing moments of adolescence or in the early failures of childhood. It may be asked in the experience of boredom or mediocrity of middle age, in the experience of wasted talents, or in the experience of approaching death in old age. To the detached observer, the spoken question may appear simply to be evidence of the instability of adolescence, or of the despair of persons with little ambition or mediocre talents, or of the waning spirit or senility of older persons.

Biblical faith does not dismiss the question so perfunctorily. It sees in the question the despair which is the consequence of man's broken relationship with his Creator. According to the Bible, man was meant to live in Paradise but has persistently and consistently chosen to live in Hell. In other words, the Bible sees man as being created in the image of God, yet as one who continually smashes the image—a sinner. Before stating the biblical doctrine of man in his relationship to God, it is necessary to examine three popular views of man.

Three Popular Views of Man

The first may be labeled the *optimistic view*. This view sees man as "little lower than the angels." It tends to interpret evil as the result of tendencies which have not yet been bred out. Proponents of this view believe that historical evil may be eliminated by more education and better social conditions. Slum eradication, more schools, better salaries, and equality of opportunity are believed to be the ways of getting rid of man's inhumanity to man. The assumption behind this view is simply that if a man finds himself and his family well clothed, well housed, well fed, and well educated, he will not only know the good but will do it. He will then be able to love his neighbor as himself.

The optimistic view sees human history as a progression upward. It has used the biological principle of evolution as an analogy of man's spiritual progress. And if we are willing to overlook certain historical incidents in the first half of the twentieth century, there is much evidence

to give credence to this view. We do know that education does change a person's views and values. But recent studies have tended to raise serious doubt about the significance of this change.¹ As Reinhold Niebuhr has pointed out, the uneducated man may steal the sticks in the forest while the educated man steals the forest. We know also that there is a correlation between crime and slum conditions. But the postwar investigations into crime and corruption in high places should leave no one with the illusion that crime is a particular disease of the poorly housed and ill-fed.

It is significant, too, that the optimistic view has lingered longer in America than in Europe. The continentals have experienced the full ravages of two world wars and are presently attempting to stem the tide of totalitarianism. They have seen six million men, women, and children tortured, bled, and destroyed because they bore the name of Jew. They have seen countless other millions dragged off to slave labor camps in the name of "freedom" and "democracy." Europeans have had their optimism shattered. They have seen man's capacity for diabolical evil. So in Europe, at least, joyful optimism seems to have given way to cynical pessimism. In America, on the other hand, despite two world wars, the rise of dictatorships, and a world-wide depression, optimism remains a prevalent mood.

The biblical argument against the optimistic view is partly pragmatic and partly the answer of faith. It is pragmatic insofar as it points to the depth of evil in every heart. Here biblical faith has found an ally in psychoanalysis. Depth psychology has discovered that what we see as our conscious motivations and conscious goals are often simply rationalizations which cover our real motivations and goals. But biblical faith goes beyond the pragmatic; it sees that "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" when compared to what God intended us to be.

The second widely held view of man is one of *cynical pessimism*. If the optimist tends to overemphasize the good in man and to minimize the evil, the pessimist sees man as a self-centered, loveless creature who cloaks his self-righteousness in pretensions of piety and goodness. If the optimist sees nothing but the angel on man's shoulder, the pessimist sees nothing but the devil. Biblical faith agrees with the pessimist at many points. It too sees with open eyes the pride and self-righteousness of man. In fact it condemns the sin of "goodness" more emphatically than any other sin. But biblical faith goes beyond the despair of cynical pessimism. It sees not only what man is, but what man by the grace of God may become. "To despair of man is not unchristian—far from it. But to despair of man in such a way that you are really despairing of God is blasphemy."² Biblical faith looks to Jesus Christ to discover not only

¹ See Philip Jacob, *Changing Values in College*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957.

² J. S. Whale, *Christian Doctrine*, p. 41. London: Cambridge University Press.

what God intended man to be; it also discovers the power of God to re-create man and to reconcile the world to himself fully.³

But there is a third view of man which perhaps is more pervasive than either optimism or pessimism. This may be described as the "*good guys—bad guys*" approach. Mankind is neatly divided into two groups: good and evil, righteous and unrighteous. On campus this division may be made between the Greeks and the independents; in international affairs, between East and West; in the church, between Protestants and Catholics, or between fundamentalists and liberals. Whenever this distinction is made, my group is always classified as "good" and the other as "evil." Here we find the ultimate in self-righteous presumption.

This attitude is characteristic of what has been known as Pharisaism: the conviction that I and mine are good and that evil resides in the other. It is graphically portrayed in Jesus' parable of the Pharisee and the publican in prayer (Luke 18:9-14a). It is in evidence in many of the so-called "Westerns" which flood the television screen. The characters in these melodramas are usually divided into classes of "good guys" and "bad guys." The "good guy" can lie, steal, or cheat; he can manipulate people; he can violate human dignity; but because he is on the side of righteousness, his actions are justified.

Biblical faith is not unaware that, humanly speaking, there is a great difference between those who strive to live up to high ethical standards and those who blatantly seek their own selfish ends. There certainly is a difference in the work of the philanthropist who builds hospitals and the criminal who peddles narcotics to children. But biblical faith sees all human activity as being tainted with self-seeking and self-righteousness. And it is this self-righteousness which is man's basic sin against God.

The Biblical View

In view of these attitudes, what may be stated as the biblical view of man? Although the entire Bible is the source for understanding man, Christian theology has usually taken the opening chapters of Genesis as its starting point. The Bible begins with God—not God *in vacuo*, but the God who creates and sustains the world, the God who creates man in his image, the God who addresses man and to whom man is responsible. Man is not man as he is in himself, but always the man who is sustained by God, dependent upon God, and responsible to God. Man is creature, but different from the other creatures. He has been given power over the rest of creation. He can make decisions. He is free. In his freedom he is able to respond to the Creator in love and obedience. Freedom also presupposes temptation. Temptation, the possibility of doing *this* rather than *that*, brings with it the possibility of one's becoming something other than the Creator intended: namely, a rebel. Once the creature

³ A more complete analysis of optimism and pessimism as contrasted with biblical faith is found in J. S. Whale, *Christian Doctrine*, pp. 35-44.

rebels, he still retains a freedom, although it is now corrupted; he is unable to return to his original state of loving communion with and obedience to his Creator. He now experiences the "wrath" of God as anxiety, guilt, and despair.

UNDERSTANDING SIN. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, the third chapter of Genesis was understood as description of an actual historical event. Adam, the progenitor of the human race, infected his offspring with "original" sin; through biological reproduction this original sin was transmitted from generation to generation. Consequently, all men sin because they inherit their sinful nature from Adam.

Two difficulties are inherent in this interpretation. The first has to do with the relation of sin and guilt. To make the entire human race guilty as the result of one man's offense seems morally indefensible. An aversion to the term "original sin" has thus developed in popular thought. The second difficulty arises out of the relationship of original sin to the sexual act in which offspring are conceived. While sex is not thought to be the cause of sin, it is nevertheless understood as the occasion whereby the sinful nature is transmitted from one generation to another. The biological transmission of sin is an idea which has caused a rather low estimate of sex and marriage in certain periods of Christian thought.⁴ With the advent of higher criticism and the movement known as existentialism the stories in the early chapters of Genesis began to receive a different interpretation: they were understood not as history but as myth.⁵ The third chapter of Genesis did not describe actual events which could be dated by the calendar. It is a description of the universal human situation. Every human being is Adam.⁶ Consequently, the myth of the creation and the fall is the story of our lives. Adam's sin is our sin.

There is reported to be a popular tourist's guide entitled "Where to sin in San Francisco." This title reveals a popular idea concerning sin: it is something one does which may or may not be enjoyable. The Bible certainly speaks often and pointedly about sins. We need not read far in the book of Genesis until we find Cain murdering Abel, Lot involved in an incestuous relation, and Jacob indulging in slick business practices. From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible is concerned about man's treacherous and violent dealings with his fellow men. Not only in the laws or commandments, but also in the prophets, in the gospels and epistles, man's unrighteous activity is condemned. But the Bible also understands sin to mean man's condition and wrong motivation. The failure of Christians to understand the full import of this concept has led to the some-

⁴ Even so recent a papal encyclical as *Sacra Virginitas* (March 25, 1954) of Pope Pius XII continues to place the celibate state on a higher plane than that of the marital.

⁵ See footnote on the use of this term in Chapter V, page 53.

⁶ Etymologically the word *Adam* simply means *Man* or *Mankind*.

what ridiculous condemnation of peccadilloes, on the one hand, and to the growth of self-righteousness on the other. Card playing, dancing, whistling on Sunday, moving pictures, smoking and chewing tobacco have all been catalogued as heinous sins by one Christian group or another. If man refrained from these activities, he could luxuriate in a sense of righteousness unavailable to those who indulged in such pastimes.

Jesus faced a similar situation in first-century Palestine. Many Pharisees did not understand sin in terms other than activity. Jesus, however, looked beneath the act to the attitude or motivation. He judged the lustful heart in the same terms as the adulterous act, and anger in the same terms as murder. He saw quite clearly that often man does the right thing but for the wrong reason. The Pharisee was one who pretended to be something he was not, i.e., a hypocrite, a "play actor." When the concept of sin is understood to cover not only acts but also motives and attitudes, we all fall under the condemnation of being hypocrites. In our daily round of activities we play different roles. Like the ancient Greek actor, we put on different masks which hide the real self—one mask for the classroom, another for the dormitory or frat house, one for the heavy date, one for employer, one for parents, and another for our friends. Seldom, if ever, do we take off the masks and follow the popular admonition to "be yourself." The real self is hidden from the world. And quite often we hide our real motives from ourselves by covering them with a thin veneer of civilization which we call good manners or good taste. This pretense is also sin.

But the Bible goes even deeper than motives and attitudes. Biblical thought also sees sin as the universal human condition. In other words, it sees man as under bondage to sin. Man is a sinner, not simply one who commits sins, but one who does so inevitably. Sin as condition can be understood both as active and passive. It is alienation and rebellion. As alienation it is experienced as loneliness, despair, and anxiety. These experiences are not the cause of sin but the actual experience of sin as the condition of alienation or estrangement from God. Being separated from our Creator thus causes us to be separated from each other. More than this, being separated from God means separation from our essential selves. We are schizoid or "split" personalities. The selves we know we ought to be and the selves we actually are, are separated from each other. We find examples of this alienation in the breakdown of real community within and without the university and in the frantic efforts to find community by forming all kinds of clubs and organizations. It is found in the quest for togetherness. Our alienation from self is evidenced in our numerous counseling programs, our mental health societies, and our clinics and mental hospitals. It is evidenced in our desire to be well liked and in our quest for adjustment. The Bible points to the basic cause of our experiences of alienation, separation, and estrangement—it is our

alienation from the God who created us for himself. As Augustine wrote, "our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee."

Sin as condition, however, can also be understood as rebellion. Sin is experienced as the bondage of the will. Our difficulty is not in not knowing the good; it is in being unable to will to do the good. Sin as rebellion usually brings with it further sin: the sin of self-justification. "I had to crib on that examination; otherwise I wouldn't have received my degree and couldn't have gotten the job I was promised."

So far the problem of sin has been treated as a purely personal affair. And there can be no doubt that individual responsibility for sin cannot easily be shrugged off as resulting simply from environmental conditioning. Yet sin may also be a corporate matter. Nations and churches sin just as surely as do the individuals within these communities. Reinhold Niebuhr has suggested that the pride of nations is more than simply the collective pride of individuals. A certain anonymity to committee decisions enables individual members to avoid the "bad conscience" which would normally develop if each had to make the decision by himself and had been forced to accept the responsibility for the decision. The fact that a large community can act with little conscience save the conscience of the individuals within it means that the sins of the community are not only more difficult to remedy than are the sins of individuals but are also more difficult to perceive as sins.

According to the Bible man is unable to extricate himself from his egocentric predicament, and every attempt to "pull himself up by his bootstraps" succeeds only in involving him in further sin. The Bible does not stop here, however; it claims that God has offered man a way out of his predicament. Through the activity of God in Christ, man is offered the possibility of becoming what he is meant to be. Man's need for community, acceptance, and a new self are graciously fulfilled by God. God's activity is understood in the biblical categories of reconciliation, justification, and sanctification.

RECONCILIATION. The history of religion can be seen as man's attempt to "get right with God." In certain phases of this history, man attempts (through ritual and sacrifice) to appease the divine powers. In other phases he may try to buy his salvation through good deeds and right living. Or he may eschew every self-centered desire and try to become reconciled to God by the process of self-abasement. These responses indicate varying answers to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" The question finds its classical expression in the story of the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:30). The question grows out of a situation filled with despair. The jailer is a potential suicide. Yet the question also indicates the jailer's hope, a hope that man is not subject to some ineluctable fate, but may find a way out of the human predicament.

The question, however, points up the egocentric predicament: the

questioner wished to *do* something. He wants salvation but he wants to earn it. Therefore, the question "What must I do . . ." is the question which all religion, even Christianity, attempts to answer. The answer given by Paul and Silas was "Believe in the Lord Jesus." What does this answer mean? It has been interpreted as meaning to believe in certain propositions about Jesus, God, and salvation. It has been interpreted to mean believing in what the Church says and doing what the Church teaches. Even the exposition of this passage in the recent *Interpreter's Bible* lists four things a person must do if he is to find salvation.

The answer given by Paul and Silas can be interpreted in the Reformed tradition, however, as meaning, "There is nothing you can do! God has already done whatever is necessary in the event known as Jesus Christ." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself." God has already accomplished what man cannot accomplish.⁷ In this act of reconciliation the barriers between God and man and between man and man are overcome. Barriers between nations, between churches, between races, between students and faculty, between Greeks and independents, between town and gown—all these have been brought to nothing by the work of God in Christ.

How then can we answer the objection that these barriers appear to be particularly formidable? Man's self-estrangement, his "godal-mightiness," and his penchant for idolatrous commitments are still very much in evidence. Several different answers have been given to this objection. One can distinguish between possibility and actuality in the Aristotelian sense. Reconciliation becomes God's possibility which man then makes an actuality. There is truth in the distinction. But the answer fails to take account of the *actual* reconciliation of God and man in Jesus Christ.

Another answer is that reconciliation has actually been accomplished and the barriers which appear to exist are mere illusions. Christian Science takes this position and consequently does not take evil seriously.

At times a distinction has been made between existence and essence. While God and man are reconciled in essence, in existence, or under the conditions of existence, man is still estranged. Consequently, the barriers between men and nations, while having no essence or foundation, continue to "exist." The answer fails to take account of the full significance of the Incarnation. In Christ, God took upon himself our full humanity, our existential condition, in order to reconcile the world to himself. This answer lies close to the Docetic position which claimed that God only appeared to be incarnate in Christ.

⁷ The classical theological term for this activity of God is *atonement*. In Jesus Christ, God and man have become one (John 10:30). This should not be understood to mean that every man is a part of God or that all possess a piece of divinity. In this reconciliation or "at-one-ness" God still remains God and man remains man. For an extended discussion, see Donald Baillie, *God Was in Christ*.

Another way in which the objection has been answered has been to discover in the Bible some "answers" which will knock down the barriers which hinder reconciliation. Yet in the problems of racial tension, international relations, and economic divisions, Christians are often found on both sides of the fence, offering solutions which may or may not help to reconcile men to each other. Before another attempt is made to answer the objection, it is necessary to examine two other biblical concepts which deal with God's relationship to man.

JUSTIFICATION. A primary affirmation of the Reformed tradition is justification by faith or justification by grace through faith alone. Historically, the doctrine may be traced to Martin Luther who discovered it in the writings of the Apostle Paul. Both Paul and Luther had experienced the despair of trying to "get right with God" or to be reconciled with God through cultic observances and good deeds. Both had experienced an inability to do so and then had discovered that God had already reconciled man to himself.

Justification in the New Testament was a legal term which meant "to be acquitted." Both Paul and Luther discovered that although their lives did not "measure up," God had justified or acquitted them through the work of Christ. Care must be taken not to push this metaphor farther than the New Testament. At times Jesus has been represented as the innocent victim who is punished by a wrathful judge for the sins of mankind; at the same time the guilty human race is exonerated. Because his justice is satisfied and sin has been paid for, God is willing to accept the guilty sinner as justified or righteous.⁸ Although justification has sometimes been so interpreted, this interpretation tends to make a travesty of divine justice. Justification is a concept which attempts to explain the experience of being accepted by God although unacceptable. Our part in this relationship is simply to accept the fact that, as Tillich says, we are accepted. This is essentially what the word "faith" meant for the Apostle Paul: a willingness to trust God who has accepted us through the work of Jesus Christ.

This saving work of God in Christ speaks to our sinful predicament in two ways. First, it makes self-acceptance possible. When man knows that God accepts him as he is, he is free to accept himself. No longer is it necessary to waste God-given time and energy in rationalizing or condemning the self for the sins of the past. Man can accept the past, learn from it, and develop his talents for creative purposes.

Lack of self-acceptance is a void which is filled by sins of self-promotion and self-condemnation. Both of these sins manifest an attitude of rather smug complacency about the human personality. They also tend to mutilate personality. Self-promotion (and its concomitant,

⁸ The words "justified" and "righteous" are translations of the same word in Greek.

rationalization) pushes guilt beneath the surface of consciousness where it can do great damage. A psychiatrist may then be required to help remove it. The person who is overly critical of himself may wallow in his guilt. He knows he is unacceptable; he spends so much time wallowing that he is unable to live creatively. These two apparent opposites, self-promotion and self-condemnation, are actually quite closely related. On the surface it appears that self-promotion is the result of pride whereas self-condemnation is akin to humility. Yet the person who continually abases himself is usually quite proud of his efforts. Nietzsche observed that "He who despises himself, nevertheless esteems himself thereby, as a despirer."⁹

When God's acceptance becomes a fact of experience, self-acceptance becomes possible. It is no longer necessary to waste valuable time and effort in trying to prove or disprove one's acceptability. One becomes free to use the memory of past mistakes and sins to understand how better to cope with life and "to glorify God and to enjoy him forever."

The second way in which God's acceptance speaks to us is in terms of what may be called "other-acceptance." There is a natural human tendency to try to "help" others become more as they ought to be. The way "they ought to be" usually turns out to be quite a bit like "me." The standard for most reform movements tends to reflect the value systems of the reformers. "No mortal but is narrow enough to delight in educating others into counterparts of himself,"¹⁰ wrote Wilhelm Meister. Making others into carbon copies of the self is a temptation for everyone. It is especially a temptation for those who preach and teach. If it is possible to persuade others to think, act, and be more like "me," then one has enlisted support for self-promotion.

When one has the security of God's acceptance and its consequence, self-acceptance, this kind of self-deception becomes unnecessary. One begins to accept others as they are. If acceptance is offered only on the basis of correct belief or right action, then the other person's security is threatened. He will not express doubts or expose himself to criticism lest he be rejected. This should not be construed to mean that reformation is not often called for on both the individual and the collective levels. It does mean that community is possible. Only where a person is secure in the knowledge that he is accepted as he is will he dare to expose his ideas, his values, his religious beliefs to criticism. Where a person lives in a community of acceptance inner reform and growth become possible.

SANCTIFICATION. This New Testament concept attempts to

⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, "Beyond Good and Evil," *The Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, p. 75. New York: The Tudor Publishing Co., 1931.

¹⁰ Wilhelm Meister, quoted by H. W. Fowler in *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage*, p. 112. London: Oxford University Press, 1926.

describe the saving work of God in Christ. In the Greek the word is derived from the same root as the words "saint" and "holy." These latter words, unfortunately, have become filled with moralistic connotations. "Saint" and "holy" in a certain sense have become synonymous with "self-righteous" and "sanctimonious." The root meaning of the New Testament concept of sanctification, however, is "to be set apart for and dedicated to a particular purpose." This seems to be the meaning of Jesus' words in John 17:17-19. To be sanctified is not simply to be called out of the world to a life of an ascetic mystic. To be sanctified means to be equipped, to be renewed, in order to go into the world to witness to the reconciling activity of God in history. Sanctification means also possibility. Those who are sanctified are sent into the world and are able by the grace of God to help establish a community of acceptance where it did not before exist.

Perhaps we are now at the point where we can offer a tentative answer to the objection which was raised earlier. This objection is often phrased in some such terms as the following: "Christianity has had two thousand years to bring peace on earth and good will among men. Yet we still have divided churches and bickering Christians. Moreover, we are threatened by a global holocaust unimaginable to previous generations." This is a serious indictment. We could try to escape the charge by saying that only a few persons in any generation have been willing to take the "good news" seriously. Only when mankind accepts the full consequences of sanctification will the world ever know peace on earth and good will among men. While this may well be true, we are still left with the embarrassing question, Why have not more people become sanctified? Actually the objection is based on a misunderstanding of what the New Testament message is all about. The New Testament sees all of history as a battleground between God and demonic powers. It is not between the good guys and the bad guys, nor is it between the enlightened and the unenlightened. It is a war which takes place within the human mind, soul, and spirit of every person. The decisive battle of this war has been won in the cross of Jesus Christ. His Resurrection is the symbol of victory. We are now engaged in the mopping-up process. The barriers of the enemy, such as political tyranny, racial tension, economic injustice, are seriously weakened. The task of the Christian is to engage in the war with the confidence that the ultimate victory belongs to God.

Interest and Disinterest

The student leaned back and smiled as he said, "So this is 'Be Kind to God Week.' I wondered who all the visitors were."

A stock campus joke of recent days goes something like this: "Have you heard of the latest do-it-yourself kit? It consists of two sticks, three nails, and a dirty Jew. Get it? A crucifixion kit!"

As the Christmas season approached, one of the boys at the fraternity house on the corner seemed to think this line contained a great deal of humor: "I don't give a damn what his name is; get him out of my manger."

These remarks, together with dozens of other wisecracks about "J. C. and his boys," are a part of any university campus. Yet strangely enough, it is this generation that is reading, hearing, and talking about Barth, Brunner, Tillich, and the Niebuhrs. In church circles this is quite literally a period dominated by discussions of the Word of God, Jesus Christ. This is an era when those outside the Church are willing to listen to a Christ-centered person or group speak of Christian insights into politics, spiritual problems in contemporary literature, and effects of existentialism on theology. It is an era when those without the Church have expressed appreciation for its contribution to healthy nationalism and racial justice. Christ and his followers do not necessarily stand in a bad light today within the university.

These seemingly contrasting currents of thought are part of the stream of life in our time. The question, "What think ye of Christ?" is considered our most irrelevant and our most significant question. From the Christian's point of view this question has the deepest meaning for all men at all times regardless of whether they recognize it or not. One of the tasks of the Christian community in the university is to raise this question and to witness to it effectively.

This is a difficult task, not only because the non-Christian feels that the Church is asking and answering a question which does not even interest him, but also because there is confusion in the Church itself concerning what it thinks of Christ.

Our Knowledge of Jesus Christ

Part of this confusion is due to the fact that average church members

are now familiar to some degree with biblical criticism. Newspaper and magazine articles have featured stories entitled "100,000 Errors of the Bible," "The Walls of Jericho Did Not Fall," and "The Dead Sea Scrolls Throw Light on the Bible." Such knowledge has tended to undermine a naive acceptance of the scriptures. Men now wonder whether or not they can accept the gospel stories about Jesus as being in any way reliable. The average American churchman is in a sense passing through the struggle that the continental scholars grappled with in the nineteenth century as they sought to find the historical Jesus, discover his inner life, and psychoanalyze him.

Fortunately, men today have received additional contributions from the world of scholarship and do not have to tread the same long, dark road in quest of the historical Jesus. One of these contributions has been a new appreciation of history. Men like Dilthey and Collingwood have brought to intellectual acceptance the impossibility of pure, objective history. This is true of all history, not just biblical history. All men write from some perspective, with a particular vocabulary and under the influence of a personal, physical, or psychological force.

The foregoing remarks become meaningful in terms of the gospels when we recall the distinction pointed out by H. Richard Niebuhr. He calls our attention to the difference between "internal" and "external" history.¹ There is a difference between the history which reads, "Four-score and seven years ago *our fathers*. . .," and that which reads, "On July 4, 1776, certain men of the British colony in America declared themselves independent. . . ."

While these two versions sound exceedingly different, neither one is necessarily in error. One is internal history and the other is external. Now the Bible clearly declares itself to be internal history. This is true of the gospels. They were written for a purpose. They did not pretend to be objective biographies. The Gospel of Luke does indicate that some care had been taken to arrange the materials in order, but contemporary scholars assure us that the gospels are basically expansions of the *Kerygma*. Mark, the earliest of the gospels, is clearly an expression of the early proclamation of the stupendous event of God's being in Jesus Christ.² The synoptics present the facts of the life of Jesus, but these facts are seen and recorded through the eyes of faith. This does not imply that the facts of the life of Jesus have been so transformed by the writers' faith that the truth is irrecoverably lost. It is, rather, an affirmation that the faith arose out of the facts which were in turn recorded through the eyes of faith.

This point of view is frequently expressed by referring to the gospels

¹ H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Meaning of Revelation*, pp. 59ff. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1946.

² A. M. Hunter, *Interpreting the New Testament*, p. 36. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1950.

as portraits rather than photographs. The portraits that these men of faith paint are admittedly different from the portraits found in the records of the Roman army or a disinterested chronicler. Nevertheless, they are not worthless and unreliable; on the contrary, they preserve for us the witness of the early Christian community. And we have good reasons for trusting their testimony.³

With even these sketchy facts in mind, it is possible to see why men like Cullman in *Christ and Time* and Tillich in *The Interpretation of History* are able to affirm that Christ is the center of history. From the Christian point of view all other historical data are seen in the light of this central event.

The facts, then, that we have concerning Jesus have been given to us by men of faith. These witnesses are not particularly interesting or exciting in and of themselves. As long as they remain in the realm of flesh and blood they will not be very significant one way or the other. It is only as we come to know this Jesus as the Word of God, by the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit, that we can truly say that we know Jesus Christ. Facts about him then become *our* knowledge of *our* Lord and Saviour.

What Manner of Man?

What, then, is the witness of the gospels concerning this One? Our inability to answer this question accounts for much of the confusion concerning Jesus Christ. This is not to say that all who study the Bible seriously will agree. In fact, experience proves that equally dedicated students of the scriptures do differ concerning their views of Jesus. Nevertheless, a great deal of the perplexity concerning this Man is due to ignorance of the early witnesses.

Discussions about the person of Jesus Christ are not as foreign and esoteric as one might imagine. The late Dorothy Sayers illustrates this fact by discussing the Son of God and the Son of man in this fashion:

What does this suggest, except that God the Creator (the irritable old gentleman with the beard) in some mysterious manner fathered upon the Virgin Mary something amphibious, neither one thing nor t'other, like a merman? And, like human sons, wholly distinct from and (with some excuse) probably antagonistic to the father? And what, in any case, has this remarkable hybrid to do with John Brown or Tommy Atkins?⁴

While those who express their faith in the foregoing words are called

³ The fact that the gospel writers include the story of Jesus' baptism although it presented them with the real problem as to why the Lord who was sinless underwent baptism, which was for the remission of sins, indicates their faithfulness to the actual events they record.

⁴ Dorothy Sayers, *Creed or Chaos?* pp. 32-33. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co. (C) 1948 Dorothy L. Sayers. Used by permission.

Nestorians by theologians, we cannot automatically assume that this two-dollar word separates the problem from the average man. It was Average Man and Woman who carried on the tradition and formulated the teachings of the early Church. In other words, very ordinary people manufacture theology as they think and talk. And for some strange reason, ordinary people do talk about Jesus Christ. Whether seeking to understand something about him that will serve as a basis for trust in him, or whether trying to express indifference to him, ordinary people do think and talk about him.

TWO EXTREMES. The pendulum of thought swings to two extremes. The first, which becomes clear as we study the theological thought of the last century, emphasizes the humanity of Jesus. Perhaps this is the most natural thing for human beings to do. We know only human beings, some good and some bad, some intelligent and some dull, but all human. When it comes to Jesus, we think of him as a great man about whom many fabulous stories have originated. The theologians of another era expressed this for us by insisting that Paul and others had invented the dogma concerning the deity of Jesus while the gospels reminded us that he was simply a humble man who made no great claims for himself.

While theology has revolted against the thinking of Jesus as being only a mere man, we have received a number of healthy contributions from this period. D. M. Baillie⁵ indicates that the "modernist" emphasis of nineteenth-century theology brought back into the main currents of thought the reality of the human limits of our Lord's knowledge, the human character of our Lord's miracles, and the human character of our Lord's moral and religious life. In offering these summary remarks, Professor Baillie is not trying to deny the miraculous; he is simply saying that today, as in other periods of the Church's history, we are taking seriously the humanity of Jesus.

Professor William Muehl of Yale tells of a conscientious student who expressed his surprise when a fellow student seemed to speak of Christ as "a good man" by saying, "You don't really believe that he was *just* a good man, do you?" Professor Muehl commented that "a good man" is no small thing. Good men, the kind of men God wants, are a rare commodity. This is precisely what Jesus was. He was a good man, a perfect man, one in whom God was Lord. He is the perfect expression of God's intention for all mankind. This is not to say that he simply "behaved" better than any other man. It is to assert that he is a new type of man—a new creation. It is interesting to speculate as to whether or not Christians today could have as great insights into human nature

⁵ D. M. Baillie, *God Was in Christ*, pp. 12-15. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948.

and be used by the power of God if they were to be as obedient to God as Jesus was. In this regard, J. W. Bowman says:

If he [Jesus] had the insights of which we have been speaking, then he had them because a perfect man can have them. He had them because he was and is the *imago Dei* and therefore the proper exemplar of what sinful man is to become, because from the beginning God has intended man for a unique authority . . . (cf. Gen. 1:28 with Heb. 2:5-9).⁶

As a matter of fact, some of these questions concerning Jesus will never be answered with finality and certainty. For while the scriptures clearly witness to the fact that Jesus was a man with all the limitations of knowledge that go with a man, they also declare him to be a perfect man. As indicated in the above quotation from Professor Bowman's book, no one can limit the possibilities of the knowledge of a perfect man. Nevertheless, Christians need to remember that Jesus lived a life of obedience and faithfulness *as a man*. In this context the biblical statement that Jesus was "born under the law" takes on new meaning. It stresses the humanity of Jesus as essential for our salvation. It underlines the fact that this man, who shared our humanity, lived a life of perfect obedience and faithfulness before God his Father. His perfect human life fulfilled the requirements of the law upon mankind.

THE JESUS OF HISTORY. The Church today, as well as in preceding years, is interested in the Jesus of history. It recognizes that church history, like all history, was written from a standpoint of faith. But it believes that the witness of the early Church is important. The reality of God's entering the stream of human history is important. The Christian faith is not based upon abstract thought concerning God but upon the historical reality of God's coming in Jesus Christ. Admittedly, not everyone who hears of the historical Jesus will see the Christ of faith, but this does not render the Jesus of history unimportant. We must confess that the flesh which was Jesus' was a "veil," but this veiled revelation of God is the clearest and most complete revelation man has. We should not let these words imply to us that God who was revealed by this veiled revelation is something or someone else other than God himself. Since God chose to make himself known to man by participating in human history, what we know of God is inseparable from the Jesus of history. Donald Baillie reminds us that "If it is true that 'no man can say, Jesus is Lord, except in the Holy Spirit,' it is equally true that no man can say it, in the truly Christian sense, except through a knowledge of what Jesus actually was, as a human personality, in the days of His flesh."⁷

⁶ From *Prophetic Realism and the Gospel* by John Wick Bowman. Copyright, 1955, by W. L. Jenkins, The Westminster Press. Used by permission.

⁷ Baillie, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

Perhaps the remarks concerning Jesus as God's most complete and final revelation of himself need an additional word of clarification. These expressions are used to imply that the very heart of God's nature has been unveiled in Jesus Christ. They do not in any sense mean that God no longer speaks to man today. On the contrary, the revelation of God in Jesus Christ proclaims God as the eternal "Thou" whom every "I" must encounter. The unveiling of God which took place in Jesus Christ reveals a personal God who seeks communion with man.

We can say all this without totally ignoring the work of Form Criticism. Bultmann, representing this group, indicates that the Form Critics have abandoned all attempts to discover the personality of the historic Jesus and are content to meet existentially the Christ that is above all history. But as Mary Ely Lyman points out:

What he taught was so inseparably bound up with what he did—his own character becoming so essentially part of his message—that there is something of artificiality in the attempt to state the teaching in any detached way.⁸

Furthermore, Oscar Cullman declares that while it is necessary to grasp the theological meaning of redemptive history from its presentation as a whole, it is "impossible to regard the fact of a development in time as only a *framework*, of which we must strip the account in order to get at the kernel. . . ."⁹ In addition, Professor Cullman reminds us that "the Gospel tradition has history itself as its object, since indeed it declares that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ of Israel."¹⁰

While these remarks concerning the humanity of Jesus and his historic personality are in no wise complete, they serve to remind us that theology today recognizes both his humanity and his historical personality as important.

God Was in Christ

As has been indicated, much of the emphasis on the humanity of Jesus came out of the "liberal Protestantism" of the nineteenth century. As one reads Barth's *Church Dogmatics*¹¹ one gets the impression that the pendulum is swinging the other direction and that Barth is not genuinely interested in the historical personality of Jesus. The same can be said concerning Brunner's *The Mediator*. This is not to say that these

⁸ Mary Ely Lyman, *Jesus*, p. 14. New York: Association Press, 1937.

⁹ From *Christ and Time* by Oscar Cullmann. Copyright, 1950, by W. L. Jenkins, The Westminster Press. Used by permission.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32. See also C. H. Dodd, *History and the Gospel*, pp. 90-101.

¹¹ This is particularly noticeable in such summaries as Leuba's *Résumé Analytique de la Dogmatique ecclésiastique de Karl Barth* and Otto Weber's *Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics*.

men fail to bear witness to the Word becoming flesh; to the contrary, Brunner writes:

To be "made flesh" means among other things an actual state of presence, sensible, external, non-spiritualized. Incarnation means entering into the realm of visible fact, being the object of police reports, a subject for the photographer, for the commonplace journalist, and other things of that kind. It is a state in which an individual can be touched, handled, or photographed; it is an isolated fact within time and space, the filling of a certain point within time and space which apart from this fact would have remained empty, and which can be filled in with this fact alone: all this belongs to the actuality of the Incarnation of the Word.¹²

So also Barth declares "the Creator Himself, without encroaching upon His deity, becomes, not a demi-god, not an angel, but very soberly, very really a man."¹³

Nevertheless one gets the impression from these theologians that the historical personality of Jesus is of little consequence. Only time will tell whether or not the Church is going to cast overboard the contributions of the last century and return to a new form of docetism or Logotheism.

Bultmann seems to have moved in this direction: "... interest in the personality of Jesus is excluded—and not merely because, in the absence of information, I am making a virtue of necessity. I do indeed think that we can now know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus, since the early Christian sources show no interest in either, are moreover fragmentary and often legendary; and other sources about Jesus do not exist. . . . I consider it [the whole matter of Jesus' historical personality] of secondary importance. . . . For those whose interest is in the personality of Jesus, this situation is depressing or destructive; for our purpose it has no particular significance."¹⁴

REVELATION AND CONCEALMENT. There are currents of thought in Barth and Brunner that may be used to help prevent such a reaction. Barth declares that there is an identity between the person and the message: "... the Word, the Logos, is actually the work, the *Ergon*, as well; the *verbum* is also the *opus*,"¹⁵ yet he also "suggests that, so far as we can get back to the historical Jesus, there is nothing remarkable to be found in His life and character and teaching. The human life of Jesus is not a revelation of God but a concealment of God."¹⁶ Brunner affirms

¹² From *The Mediator* by Emil Brunner. Copyright, 1947, by W. L. Jenkins, The Westminster Press. Used by permission.

¹³ Karl Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline*, p. 84. New York: Philosophical Library, 1949.

¹⁴ Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word*, pp. 8-9, 13-14. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

¹⁵ Barth, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

¹⁶ Baillie, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

that "faith presupposes, as a matter of course, *a priori*, that the Jesus of history is not the same as the Christ of faith."¹⁷

Brunner's use of the word "concealment of God" is related to Luther's use of the *deus absconditus*.

God's disclosure of himself in Christ, writes Brunner of Luther's views, is a merciful veiling of himself. It is as if God could only come to man if he took a veiled form, that is, if his terrible majesty were covered as he approached the creature, who himself could neither grasp nor endure God's majesty. At the same time this veiling imparts the genuine essence of God in his love and will toward community.¹⁸

There is practically unanimity of opinion in asserting that "flesh and blood" alone cannot reveal to men that Jesus was the Anointed of God, the Word made flesh. Since the days of Calvin the internal witness of the Holy Spirit in bringing men to an awareness of the deity of Christ has been stressed. But does this imply that there is nothing to be learned from the historical Jesus? If indeed the Man himself is inseparable from his actions and message, we cannot deny that there is a witness in the historical life of Jesus.¹⁹ If the witness of historic Christianity is correct that this is not God inhabiting a body for some thirty years, then the historic life and personality of Jesus are important. If it is true that Jesus is no intermediate demigod, half-angel, then Jesus Christ as a unified being is of concern.

The Church has declared that Jesus was not a man who gradually grew in Godlikeness until at last he was adopted into divinity. Nor has the Church believed that God changed into a man. The Church has confessed that Jesus Christ was God and man. This affirmation by the Church forces us to discuss the paradox of the Incarnation and the classical statements of the two natures of Jesus Christ.

UNITY OF NATURES. It might be noted that to talk about this paradox as though we were dealing with an object in the chemistry laboratory is to misfocus the discussion. We are dealing here with a person. This is an I-Thou relationship, not an I-It.²⁰ Though the analogy has a limited use, one can compare this discussion with one that attempts to analyze the thought and action of a child. Can we ever really conclude that the child says so and so, or does this or that, because of the "father" in him or because of the "mother" in him? Is the child not an indestructible unit? So it is when we discuss the nature of Jesus

¹⁷ Brunner, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

¹⁸ John Dillenberger, *God Hidden and Revealed*, p. 107. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1953.

¹⁹ See note 10.

²⁰ Cf. Martin Buber, *I and Thou*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953.

Christ; we cannot quickly dissect him and his actions as though he were an object, and mark this one "divine" and this one "human."

In the second place, we need to remember the warning given us by Brunner.²¹ He reminds us that if we neglect the uniqueness of the coming of Jesus Christ we sink into numerous problems. Because this event has a once-for-allness about it, we are not going to be able to find illustrations and analogies of it in the rest of life. This is not to say that we cannot in some senses refer to the event; there are words that we can use and parallels that we can draw upon. But in the final analysis, we must admit the uniqueness of this event and recognize the consequences.

The two natures become a problem for explanation, not for faith. "A relation produced by the authoritative personal Presence of the Word of God is turned into a magico-material substantial Presence. The doctrine of the Two Natures becomes the object of purely external, theoretical, semi-scientific discussion and explanation."²²

Perhaps the best discussion of this paradox is offered by Professor Baillie, for he recognizes that those who grasp the teaching will be within the community of faith, that justice must be done to the uniqueness of the appearance of Jesus Christ, and that the historicity of Jesus Christ must be taken seriously.

I, YET NOT I. The clue to understanding the nature of Jesus is found in the experience of Paul, and of Christians through the centuries, for that matter. Paul, however, expresses it clearly in the words: "I laboured . . . yet not I . . . I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Repeatedly Paul refers to this paradox. It is always a confession of his experience, not a metaphysical argument. The words that he speaks, the deeds that he performs, and the very life that he lives are attributed to Christ. "I . . . , yet not I." So Professor Baillie points out that Jesus frequently referred to his words as the words of his Father, to his work as the work of the Father, to the commandments he had received from the Father; in fact he said, "I can of myself do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is righteous; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 5:30).

"In these remarkable passages we find Jesus making the very highest claims; but they are made in such a way that they sound rather like disclaimers. The higher they become, the more do they refer themselves to God, giving God all the glory. Though it is a real man that is speaking, they are not human claims at all; they do not claim anything for the human achievement, but ascribe it all to God."²³

According to Paul and the author of Hebrews, we have a right to draw this analogy between our experiences as Christians and Christ's

²¹ Brunner, *op. cit.*, pp. 25ff.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 344. See also pp. 236-237.

²³ Baillie, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

human experience.²⁴ In the Gospel of John also we find the purpose boldly expressed that all Christ's people should come to have the same kind of unity with him, and through him with the Father, as he has with the Father: "that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me. And the glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one; that the world may know that thou didst send me, and lovedst them, even as thou lovedst me" (17:21-23).

GOD'S UNIQUE WORD. This reasoning does not lead us to see ourselves as little Jesuses or to see Jesus as only the superior one among many who have "religious" or "mystic" insights. It does lead us to recognize him as the Unique Gift of God, the first-born among many brethren, and the head of the Body.

He is the Word of God in an exclusive sense. The New Testament writers use this expression to convey much that is lost to the average reader. This Greek word, *logos*, contains a wealth of implication. On the surface it can stand for *word* as we ordinarily use the term. Jesus Christ then becomes the expression, the verbalization of God himself. He is God's means of communication to a world in need. *Logos* can also mean *deed* or *act*. And in a very real sense Jesus Christ is the deed or action of God in human terms. This word is also related to *wisdom*, and again, we can say Jesus is the wisdom of God. In Greek philosophy *logos* was related to the power that cohered, coordinated, and determined the unfolding of all history. The Gospel of John does not hesitate to refer to Jesus as the creator and preserver of all life. The Word of God—God's action, communication, power, and wisdom—comes to us today as we encounter Jesus Christ.

The Church must constantly watch itself else its thought and its life will gravitate to one of these two extremes. It will accept either the humanity of Jesus Christ to the exclusion of the deity of Christ, or the deity to the exclusion of the humanity. Only as it holds to the unity of Jesus Christ is it grasped by the mediator.

Cur Deus Homo?

Nothing can be more deadly than a mere intellectual argument concerning the person of Christ. There are a great many areas that leave themselves open for question and debate. It has been indicated in the above that it would be a wise thing for Christians to be able to handle these questions. But sooner or later the questions must become existential. We must ask why the Word had to become flesh or why Jesus

²⁴ See Romans 8:2; Colossians 1:18; Hebrews 2:11.

had to die on the cross, or the dogma concerning Christ will remain in the area of abstract thought instead of the arena of life.

GOD'S INITIATIVE. First let us remind ourselves that what we know about God is what God has chosen to reveal to us. And the God revealed by Jesus Christ is the God who takes the initiative. Jesus spoke of the shepherd who goes into the wilderness to search out the lost sheep; he spoke of the landlord who sent his servants and even his son to an ungrateful group of stewards; he told us of a Father more ready and able to give than children are to ask. Thus the presence of Jesus not only tells us about God, but it demonstrates the love of God. We can not only say that God is *like* Jesus Christ, but we can affirm that God was *in* Christ.

It has been pointed out by others that the prophets of old received the word of the Lord and communicated it to their brethren. Sometimes this was done by such a dramatic act as Isaiah's walking about the town naked or Jeremiah's throwing a piece of pottery to the ground. On other occasions the prophets used figures of speech and actual objects to illustrate their message, such as the plumb line and summer fruit used by Amos. But Jesus Christ did not receive the word of God; he was and is the Word of God. He did not have to play a role to illustrate his point; his very life was his point.

"Then He speaks and acts as God Himself, with divine personal authority, no longer in virtue of a divine commission, but in virtue of His Divine Being, as the Son, to whom the Father 'has given to have life in Himself.' . . . the Word in which God gives Himself personally to us, because in the Word He is personally present, as the bridge over the gulf between us and Him, as the Mediator."²⁵

GOD'S MEDIATOR. At this point many turn back. They see no real need to talk about a mediator. If one does not consider sin as a serious rebellion against God, one can see no reason for a mediator. If sin is only a few acts of indiscretion or lack of taste due to ignorance, man himself can handle the problem without the interference of God. But if sin is the rebellion of the total personality against the Maker, the betraying of a Person, the picture is different. The rebel and betrayer, being thus alienated, is not able even to recognize his rebellion. He can only experience a life that is out of focus.²⁶

While this line of reasoning may help us to see why the Word became flesh, we must still ask why Jesus had to die. Could not God have arranged it otherwise? Could he not simply forget our sin—just let it go? Perhaps this question would not be raised in a culture that viewed love, power, and justice in a different way from ours. We tend to identify love with foolish indulgence and sentimentality. But as Tillich

²⁵ Brunner, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

²⁶ See Chapter VI, "God and Man."

reminds us, "The justice of God is not a special act of punishment calculated according to the guilt of the sinner. But the justice of God is the act through which he lets the self-destructive consequences of existential estrangement go their way. He cannot remove them because they belong to the structure of being itself and God would cease to be God—the only thing which is impossible for him—if he removed these consequences."²⁷

THE CROSS. Thus we can say the Cross was necessary to reveal to man what sin really means to God and the meaning of justice and love. This latter word becomes meaningful when we remember that the Cross is God's participating in or identifying himself with sinful man and his consequences. As Barth expresses it, the Jew Jesus became Israel—the people of God.²⁸

What takes place in the Crucifixion of Christ is that God's Son takes to Himself that which must come to the creature existing in revolt, which wants to deliver itself from its creatureliness and itself be the Creator. He puts Himself into this creature's need and does not abandon it to itself. Moreover, He does not only help it from without and greet it only from afar off; He makes the misery of His creature His own.²⁹

Tillich declares that in the Cross the divine participation in existential estrangement becomes manifest. "The guilty conscience which looks at the Cross sees God's atoning act *in* it and *through* it, namely, his taking the destructive consequences of estrangement upon himself."³⁰

It is difficult to face the cross of Christ, for this cross has a way of uncovering our personalities. Its very existence stands as a judge, making us conscious of our sin. Its very presence disturbs our complacency and causes us to see our lack of real love. The cross shows us that within ourselves we cannot bring reconciliation. It makes us humble as we realize that we must accept the gift of God if we will ever see the broken pieces of our lives restored to wholeness.

These are some of the thoughts that must come to a person's heart as he stands at the foot of the cross. But we need to remember that Christians do not come to the foot of the cross once in a lifetime; they repeatedly experience forgiveness and reconciliation. While God has acted within the stream of history, we must remember that God in Christ is our eternal contemporary; he is even at the cross when we sin: "... they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame" (Hebrews 6:6b). These remarks in no wise indicate that we believe in an offering up of Christ upon the cross every time we have

²⁷ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. II, p. 174. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Copyright 1951 by the University of Chicago.

²⁸ Barth, *op. cit.*, pp. 72ff.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

³⁰ Tillich, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

communion or rebel against God; rather, they are to remind us that God is not bound to the temporal process as we are, that he is not living in the past. And it is our sin that placed him upon the cross.

THE RESURRECTION. We should not forget that through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ we become participators in the New Being. In a very real sense it is through Jesus Christ and in him that we know what *life* really is; we are born again; we become new creatures in him.

By the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, God asserted that sin and death did not control mankind. By Jesus' Resurrection God demonstrated his conquest of the forces of evil. By the Resurrection God brought life to the New Israel—the Body of Christ, even the Church.

We cannot engage here in a lengthy discussion of the Resurrection in relationship to miracles, evidence, the laws of nature, et cetera. However, we must clearly state that all which the Church has taught about Jesus as expressed in such doctrines as the Incarnation and the Atonement is based upon its faith in the Resurrection. It was the historical fact of the resurrection of Jesus which lay behind the life and mission of the Apostolic Church—as it is the basis of the Church's life today. Indeed we cannot help bearing witness to the reality of the living Christ. From the days of the New Testament unto the present, Christ has not sought to convince the professional skeptic or intellectually curious of his power over all powers. But men in all generations who have encountered the Word of God, who have shared in the life of the Body of Christ, can bear witness to the truth of his Resurrection.

THE ATONEMENT. The Church has sought in every era to express this work of God, this making of at-one-ment. Reconciliation between God and man has been the experience of the Church through the centuries; it has tried to remember that no dogma can fully grasp and express the extent to which God has intervened for us. No theory of the atonement should be confused with or mistaken for the reconciliation itself. "The terminology of the bank, the slave market, the law courts, the temple, the home, and the field of battle is pressed into service in an attempt to do justice to the fact of experience that sin is no longer a barrier between man and God."⁸¹

Study and Encounter in Community

In conclusion, we should remember that the depths of understanding and meaning have not been touched. We must commit ourselves to much study if we are to begin to understand the meaning of Jesus as the Christ. However, it is possible to study the theories of Jesus' Messianic

⁸¹ G. B. Caird, *The Truth of the Gospel*, p. 88. London: Oxford University Press, 1950.

consciousness or doctrines of the Atonement without commitment of life.

Therefore, study of Jesus Christ should take place within the covenant community, the Body of Christ, in order that we may become involved in the "internal history" of our salvation and not just learn about its external events. We must keep in mind that we must see Jesus Christ as *our* Lord. We must stand within the perspective of the apostles and prophets. We must put ourselves in the way of being encountered by One who is the Christ of God.

the Reformed Church in history

VIII

The Problem

The Christian is faced with two inevitable involvements when he tries to understand the history of the Church of Jesus Christ. First, he is involved with the history of mankind as understood from the limited viewpoint of his immediate culture. Because he is a man he is never free from the nature of historical existence which imposes limitations of knowledge and experience which have yet to be adequately defined. He is even less free from the particular circumstances in which he lives at this moment and through which he attempts to express himself as a human being, because his immediate situation dictates a large portion of the attitudes, beliefs, and actions that he must conform to in order to survive as a member of his culture. Second, the Christian is involved in the whole of church history as seen through the colored glasses of his immediate segment of the Church in time and space. He is not free from the good and evil which has marked the historical past of the Church, nor is he free from the totality of the life of the Church, both saintly and corrupt, in this present moment. The contemporary Christian is concretely involved in the form of churchmanship which has nurtured him. He is part of all its strengths and weaknesses, but without it he would not even know himself to be a Christian.

Thus, by virtue of being human and knowing ourselves to be Christian, we are thrust into a highly complex situation, fraught with the errors of limited knowledge and a fragmented faith, whenever we try to state the distinctive contributions of that particular tradition of the Christian faith to which we are loyal—the Reformed Church.

Theological Approach to Church History

Two factors must be firmly in mind before a significant attempt can be made to deal with the nature and mission of the Reformed or Presbyterian Churches. First, it is necessary to have a firm grasp of the nature of the Church of Jesus Christ in human history. This will of necessity entail theological definition. The necessity lies in the fact that the Church has its own language (theology) and must be allowed to use its own terms to define itself. Undoubtedly sociology, psychology, political science, anthropology, literary criticism, and many other learned

disciplines have much to contribute to the understanding of the Church as a social institution involved in the political, economic, and psychological structures of our civilization. But the language of these disciplines cannot be substituted for the language of the Church when we are trying to say what the nature of the Church is as the Church understands itself. Second, it is necessary to have a firm understanding of the fact that human history—the movements, powers, and structures of men and nations—has entered into the Church to influence and modify its structures and beliefs in every generation. It is at this level that all the tools of knowledge at the Christian's command should be used to illuminate and criticize the Church's life and mission.

The first of these factors will be an attempt to say what the Church actually is from the viewpoint of the mission and message of Jesus Christ. The second factor will be an exposition of the movements and events which have produced the contemporary situation in the Christian Church. These two factors of the nature of *the Church in history* and the nature of *history in the Church* are generally in tension with each other. When the tension becomes so great that it generates significant differences between groups within the Church, various traditions become visibly separated ecclesiastical organizations. These factors must be kept firmly in mind in interpreting church history, and especially the history of the Reformed Church.

THE CHURCH IN HISTORY is the ministry of Jesus Christ to mankind. Our empirical knowledge of this ministry begins with our knowledge of the beginnings of man, but the ministry of Christ is more than co-extensive with man's knowledge of his past. It began before man began to keep records of his story, and it will continue after the historical evidences of his existence are unidentifiable dust. This suggests an often uncharted article of Christian faith concerning the ministry of Christ in history: namely, that Jesus Christ, the eternal Word of God, has always been involved with human history. He is Alpha, the Word which was before Creation. He is the Word through whom all things were created. He is the Word that established a covenant with Israel and brought history to a climax by becoming flesh. He is the Word made flesh, even Jesus Christ, who lived, who was crucified and buried, and who rose from the dead, during the procuratorship of Pontius Pilate in Judea. He called out men to continue his incarnate ministry to the world in bodily form. This bodily form is the Church of which he is the sole Head. He is the Omega, the Word which shall write the final paragraph to human history. He is the Word which shall exist when the world is no more.

Because the Christian knows that the Church stands between the Alpha and Omega of all history, he is dead serious about the form that the Church takes in his moment of history. He is called to search and

re-search the documents of history, especially the Old and New Testaments, in order to conform the Church to the Word of God. In the middle of the twentieth century it seems that the search for the perfect form of the Church is a vain and hopeless task. There is no ecclesiastical organization which perfectly mirrors the image of Christ in this age. Knowing this does not lead to despair; it drives the Christian to a deeper study of the ministry of Christ in history in order that he may devote himself to seeing that his form of churchmanship may best fulfil its mission of proclaiming the Word to the world. This is the impelling reason for the Reformed Churches to study their history diligently in the light of the eternal Word so that they can fulfil the mission to which they have been called.

HISTORY IN THE CHURCH. A fundamental tension between purity and unity has always existed in the Church. Response to the Word has simultaneously demanded these two elements in the faith and form of the Church. The involved relationships of the people of God with the powers and structures of history have always brought these forces into the Church. Thus the Church is not only a response to the Word, but it is an accommodation of its life to the power structures of the world. Not only is the Church in history by virtue of the Word, but history is in the Church by virtue of its existence in time.

The ever-present struggle of the Church is to use the language and the forms of history to communicate the Word to the world without surrendering the Word to the temporary forms of historical experience and knowledge. The risk of such a surrender is the risk that the Church in history has to take in order to bear its witness. That accommodation to history frequently destroys true obedience to God is seen in the life and message of the prophets who call the Church to repentance and revitalization of its mission. The story of the Church before and after the Incarnation could be written in terms of the preaching of the prophets who call the Church to unconditional obedience to the pure Word of God.

The price of purity in the Church has been disunity, and disunity has been as disobedient to God as impurity. There is only one Lord; there can be only one People.

Using This Interpretative Framework

This interpretative framework can be used to give a frame of reference to evaluate church history as a whole; it is especially applicable to understanding the theological and ecclesiastical positions of the various traditions of the Christian faith. There are traditions which are informed primarily by the concept of the "purity of the Word" and which openly disparage any idea of "unity in the Word." There are also traditions of churchmanship whose primary emphasis is so strongly on corporate and

visible unity of the Church that the idea of the "purity of the Word" is relegated to a thoroughly secondary position. Probably most of the traditions of the Church are interested in both purity and unity and firmly advocate both. The weakness of the situation is usually because each tradition has an "exclusive" definition of both the Pure Word and the One Holy Church.

It is historically doubtful that there has ever been a visibly unified Holy Catholic Church. There was "party spirit" in the Apostolic Church almost from the day of its formation. Paul struggled against James in the interest of grace over legalism (Gal. 2:12-16). The actual writing of a good part of the New Testament was done to combat the destructive influence of nonhistorical pagan cosmologies and philosophies such as Gnosticism. In the second century the Church was torn by the Montanist controversy. The succeeding centuries saw the withdrawal of a number of groups from the main tradition of the Church, until finally Eastern and Western Christianity broke off communion.

These splits in the body of the Church have their rootage in the fact that history with its forms, ideas, and structure had forced the Church to follow the pattern of the world rather than unity in the Word. The greatest of the splits in the Western Church occurred in the sixteenth-century Reformation. Five main traditions of Western Christianity emerged at the close of that momentous century. These are the Roman Church, the Lutheran Churches, the Reformed Churches, the Anglican Churches, and the Anabaptist or Free Churches. Each of these traditions has suffered further schisms within its ranks so that now there are over three hundred different denominations which trace their basic heritage through Western Christianity.

Without disparaging any of our sister churches' views, this paper is written out of the conviction that the Reformed Church has an "inclusive" interest in both purity and unity which requires that it stand in a pivotal position in the ecumenical movement of this century. The Reformed Churches have a great and sound theological position based upon the authority of the Word of God, a magnificent ecclesiastical structure based on decency and order, a view of the ministry and the sacraments which may claim to be the highest in Christendom, a profound concern for the ordering of the common life of man on principles of justice and mercy. This, coupled with tremendous economic and political power, gives it a distinctive position and a weighty responsibility in the Christian world of today. When the Reformed Church is true to its understanding of the Word of God and the Church of God, it points to none of these things. This would be merely a form of sinful self-congratulation. Rather, the Reformed Church points away from itself to God alone as the giver of whatever good it possesses in its fellowship, and states its willingness to dissolve itself as a visible ecclesiastical organization in the interest of purity and unity in the Word of God.

The Holy Spirit

The Reformed Churches make one fundamental confession about the nature of the Church in history that must be underscored time and time again. This confession is that what the Church is, what the Church has received, what the Church has done, and what the Church is called to do is due to the activity of the Holy Spirit. In short, the Body of Christ is animated by the Spirit of Christ. (The terms "Holy Spirit," "the Spirit of Christ," and "the Spirit of God" all refer to the One life-giving Spirit of the eternal God.)

The Reformed Churches rest their fundamental claim of reliance on the Word of God upon the fact that the Holy Spirit enlivens scripture so that it can be heard and received as the very Word of God in Christ's Church. Lesslie Newbigin indicates the extent to which the Church relies upon the Spirit in these words:

It is the Spirit who gives power to the words of the Christian preaching, which as mere words can accomplish nothing (I Cor. 2:4; I Thess. 1:5; Rom. 15:19). It is the Spirit who guides the Church in its day-to-day activity (Acts 6:3), directs its missionary work (Acts 8:29; 10:19-20; 16:6-8), supplies all the differing gifts which are required for its common life (I Cor. 12:4-30; Phil. 1:19), and leads it into all truth (John 16:13). It is the Spirit who rules over the Church's worship and fellowship (I Cor. 14). And the Spirit Himself gives the spiritual sight by which He is to be discerned.¹

Seen from this perspective, the Church's history is the biography of the Holy Spirit. It is the abiding conviction of the Presbyterian tradition that when the Word has been purely proclaimed it has been the work of the Spirit, and that where there is realization of the unity of the Church it is because the Spirit is powerfully bearing witness to the Lordship of Christ. Because of this conviction it is not difficult to understand why the Reformed tradition is stirring itself to bear witness to the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

Beginnings of the Reformed Churches

The Reformed Churches have their roots in two distinct but similar movements of the early days of the Reformation. The first was the demand for reform in the German-speaking parts of Switzerland under the leadership of Huldreich Zwingli (1484-1531). The second was the movement of protest which was nurtured and shaped by the intellectual genius of John Calvin (1509-64) with its headquarters in French-speaking Switzerland at Geneva. Although these two men never met, the movements which they represented blended into one and produced the first genuine international Protestant tradition.

¹ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God*, p. 99. New York: Friendship Press, 1954.

Zwingli was an educated humanist, a critical intellectual of the sixteenth century. He was also a radical Swiss patriot. These two factors compelled him to separate from the Roman Church and enter the ferment of the evangelical awakening that was just beginning. As a humanist he was interested in returning to the original documents of the Christian faith. This drove him to the Bible. As a Swiss patriot he wanted his country to be free of the moral evil of mercenary military service. This drove him to believe that local civil authority, and eventually local church authority, was superior to the hierarchy of the empire and the papal system. In 1519, as people's priest in Zurich, he began an orderly public exposition of the books of the Bible. He became acquainted with the writings of Luther. By 1522 he had committed himself to the following evangelical principles: the supremacy of scripture, salvation by faith, Christ the sole head of the Church, marriage for the clergy. By 1525 Zurich had abolished the Roman mass, episcopal jurisdiction had been thrown off, the older forms of worship had been done away with, and priests and nuns were being married. Zwingli hoped for widespread political reforms, but the rural cantons, which were conservative and Roman, opposed all changes. On October 11, 1531, the Roman cantons defeated the men of Zurich in battle, and Zwingli was killed.

The Swiss movement as a whole came under the leadership of John Calvin, who was called to Geneva in 1536. Like Zwingli, Calvin was an intellectual; unlike Zwingli, personal religious experience brought Calvin into the evangelical movement. He began the process of welding the scattering of French Protestants, German Protestants who were not Lutheran, and evangelical refugees from Holland, Scotland, and England into the Christian force that we know as the Reformed Church. This was mainly accomplished in the thirty years between Calvin's conversion (1534) and his death (1564).

During these thirty years Lutheranism lost much of its original energy, and Roman Catholicism experienced a militant revival. Lutheranism was contained almost completely within the area occupied by German-speaking people and the Scandinavian peninsula. Evangelical movements in Spain, Italy, and Poland were crushed. It was from the Reformed strongholds in the Swiss cities that Protestantism continued to expand in Europe and offer effective resistance to a revitalized papacy. Standing at the center of this international Protestantism was John Calvin, the intellectual and organizational genius of the century, working for both the unity and the purity of the Church of Jesus Christ. Standing with Calvin in loyalty to the Word were men of only slightly less status, from nearly every nation in Europe, like Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575), Zwingli's successor in Zurich; Guillaume Farel (1489-1565), a French reformer who became pastor in Geneva; John Knox (1505-1572), the reformer of Scotland.

Spread of the Reformed Church

The spread of the Reformed system of doctrine and churchmanship into the life of many national cultures indicates the inner genius and mission of the tradition. The Reformed system never has represented itself as a split off the Western Church; rather, it has claimed to be a purified system of Christian faith, that is, "reformed" in keeping with the Word of God, upon which Christendom can be unified.

FRANCE: From the early beginnings of the reform in France, which helped Calvin find himself, the Reformed Church grew to a nationally organized synod, embracing over two thousand congregations by 1559. The Church wrote the *Confessio Gallica*, a classical expression of Calvinistic theology, and adopted *The Book of Ecclesiastical Discipline* which established the Presbyterian system of church government in French Protestantism. However, due to increased persecution culminating in the Massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day in 1572 and the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, the Reformed faith was all but driven from France by the close of the century. It is estimated that a half million French Huguenots carried their faith with them to England, America, Holland, and Germany, enriching those lands with their love of Christian freedom.

HOLLAND: Protestants in the Netherlands suffered severe persecutions until William of Orange declared himself a Calvinist in the struggle for his country's freedom. Under his leadership the Northern Netherlands provinces won their freedom and established the Dutch Republic in 1579. The Dutch Reformed Church adopted the *Belgic Confession* in 1563 and organized its life along the lines of the Presbyterian system. When the Dutch entered the race to gain a colonial empire in the seventeenth century, they carried the Reformed faith with them into Africa, Asia, and America.

ENGLAND: Although England repudiated the Church of Rome in 1534 and was greatly influenced by Calvinistic thought—especially in the Puritan movement in the Anglican Church—it never proved to be receptive to the Presbyterian system of church government. For a brief period the Church of England was Presbyterian in form (1648-60); due to the work of the Westminster Assembly of Divines appointed by Parliament in 1643, when the Puritans rather than the monarchists were in control of England. The Westminster Assembly met in active session for more than five years, trying to formulate purer standards of doctrine, worship, and life for the English Church. Their work remains one of the fundamental statements of the Presbyterian Standards. These include *The Directory for the Public Worship of God*, 1644 (designed to take the place of the Book of Common Prayer in worship); *The Form*

of Government and Ordination, 1644 (a form); *The Confession of Faith*, 1648; *The Larger and Shorter Catechism*, 1647. Although the English Church returned to the Episcopal system in 1660, the Westminster Standards have been accepted in nearly every English-speaking Presbyterian Church in the world as their official statements of faith and order.

SCOTLAND: The evangelical faith came early to Scotland under dedicated men like Patrick Hamilton and George Wishart, but it came to full flower under the masterful hand of John Knox, who had studied under Calvin for four years (1554-58). In 1557 the "Lords of the Congregation" covenanted with each other before God "that we shall with all diligence continually apply our whole power, substance, and our very lives to maintain, set forward, and establish the most blessed Word of God and His congregation; and shall labour at the possibility to have faithful ministers purely and truly to minister Christ's evangel and sacraments to his people." This was the signal for Knox to return to Scotland and lead the struggle against Catholic Mary Queen of Scots. The victory went to Knox and the Reformed faith. It must be recorded as the most decisive victory of Protestantism in the Western world. The most interesting feature of the Scottish reformation is that for the first time the entire national life of the people was affected. Government, education, and morality were all lifted and refined under the influence of the Reformed faith. In 1559 the *Scotch Confession* was published, and the first *Book of Discipline* was issued in 1560; both of these were examples of the Reformed theology and Presbyterian polity. Later the Westminster Standards were adopted and have become so closely associated with the Scottish Church that most Presbyterians have forgotten that they were written in England.

A more complete accounting of the spread of the Reformed system would have to cover nearly every nation in Europe. There are church bodies in Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Italy, and even Spain which accepted the Presbyterian system of church order and the Reformed theology.

AMERICA: It is not too strong a statement to say that the majority of people living in the United States at the close of the Revolutionary War were strongly attached to some facet of the Reformed tradition. It should be noted that while all Presbyterians are Calvinists, not all Calvinists are Presbyterians in the form of church government they prefer. Many of them have preferred a congregational form of government as did the Pilgrims of Massachusetts. The Dutch, who were the first settlers in New York and New Jersey, were mostly of the Dutch Reformed Church. The French Huguenots settled by the thousands in New York, Virginia, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Georgia, and most of them entered Presbyterian Churches. Early Scottish Presbyterians settled in

New York, New Jersey, the Carolinas, and laid the foundations for a formally organized Presbyterian Church in America. Between 1705 and 1775 at least half a million Scotch-Irish from North Ireland came to America and dispersed over nearly all the colonies. These hardy pioneers became the backbone of the fighting soldiers of the American Revolution and the Presbyterian Church.

The Reformed tradition has spread throughout the world. It has taken on the coloration of many cultures, nationalities, and languages. There are more than thirty million Christians in the Presbyterian and Reformed family of Churches, yet a sense of oneness binds them together.

Points of Reformed Pride and Responsibility

There needs to be a serious evaluation of salient points which hold this diverse Christian tradition in common bonds of faith and concern. This is not to suggest that there have not been many bigoted Presbyterian individuals and churches—there have been all too many of them—but it is to suggest that there is a great pride of tradition which binds the majority of Presbyterians together as a body of believers. Careful study of these “distinctive” areas of commitment should draw us all closer to the central mission of the Reformed Churches.

THE REFORMED THEOLOGICAL HERITAGE. The Reformed Church has always presented an informed, ordered, and complete theological system to the view of the whole world. This insistence upon a full-blown, carefully reasoned presentation of the Christian faith has its roots in the work of John Calvin. In the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* Calvin is not undertaking to discuss a few important religious themes; he is offering, as far as it is possible, a complete handbook of Christian theology. It is not too much to say that he attempts to set forth the sum-total of theology, certainly all the knowledge that is necessary for salvation. The following outline² of the *Institutes* clearly indicates this attempt at completeness.

A. *The Knowledge of God as Creator.*

1. From Nature.
 - a. In creation.
 - b. In providence: Corruption of reason. Necessity of the Scriptures. Nature and truth of the Scriptures. Their authority.
2. From the Scriptures.
 - a. In creation: State of man, faculties of the soul, freewill, original righteousness.
 - b. In providence: General and particular providence.

² From *Calvinism* by Arthur Dakin. Copyright, 1946, by The Westminster Press. Used by permission.

The problem of evil. The doctrine of God as will.

B. *The Knowledge of God as Redeemer.*

Man's failure. Original sin. Corruption of will and intellect. Redemption to be sought in Christ.

1. How Christ Is Exhibited to Us.

a. In the Old Testament: A perfect standard of righteousness in the Law. Exposition of the Decalogue.

b. In the New Testament: Christ as Mediator. The two natures in Christ. The three offices of the mediator. How Christ mediates—the atonement.

2. How Christ Is Received by Us.

Benefits of Christ made available for us by the Holy Spirit. Faith. Repentance. The Life of obedience and self-denial. Justification by Faith. Christian liberty. Prayer. Exposition of Lord's Prayer. The eternal election. The last resurrection.

3. How We Are Retained in the Fellowship. The nature of the Church. The Word. The sacraments. The ministry and government of the Church. Civil government.

This attempt at a complete system has been repeated every time a Reformed Church attempts to set forth the Christian faith in a formal way. It shines through the Westminster Standards, the *Belgic Confession*, and the *Confessio Gallica*. In this generation it shines through the massive theological endeavors of Karl Barth. It underscores two facts: First, the Reformed Church is concerned with the whole faith, not some sectarian or casual exposition of it; second, the Reformed Church feels that it is speaking from within the Universal Church for the Universal Church. It speaks for both purity and unity of the faith.

THE CHURCH AND CHURCHMANSHIP. A Reformed churchman never says, "I believe in the Presbyterian Church"; rather he says, "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church." From the beginning of the Reformed tradition there has been a profound and unequivocal belief in the Church. There has never been the slightest inclination to conceive of serious trust in Jesus Christ apart from his Church, because the Church is the Body of Christ. To be alive in Christ is to be in his Body. This high doctrine of the Church is never conceived of in terms of the trite word "denomination." ("Denomination" is simply a word that designates certain ecclesiastical structures within the Church; it is never descriptive of the Church itself.)

This inclusive sense of the Church is deeply embedded in the *Institutes* of Calvin. He describes the Church as "the whole multitude, dis-

persed all over the world, who profess to worship one God and Jesus Christ, who are initiated into his faith by baptism, who testify their unity in true doctrine and charity by a participation of the sacred supper, who consent to the word of the Lord; and preserve the ministry which Christ has instituted for the purpose of preaching it.”³ Calvin plainly urges that there be no schism in the Church. He teaches that any congregation that holds to the order of Word and Sacrament must be honored as a Church. Even defects in Word and Sacrament are not to alienate us from other congregations, as long as they are present, and still less are we to break fellowship with a congregation because of the unholy lives of some of its members. This places the Reformed tradition firmly in a position that insists upon unity in the Church of Jesus Christ.

This Reformed conception of the Universal Church is carefully preserved in its polity and ministry. All ministers are of necessity ministers of the one Holy Catholic Church. This insists that there is One Church no matter how many congregations can be named and delineated. The Presbyterian polity has evolved a form of conciliar government by which the Church as a whole can express its mind on any subject under the authority of the Mind of Christ alone.

Conclusion

The Reformed tradition is realistic in its analysis of itself. It knows full well that man is caught and twisted into subhuman patterns by the forces of history, but it also knows that God has always been redemptively active in the life of man. Presbyterians are deeply aware of these forces of history which are constantly entering the Church to pervert and distort its fellowship and its mission, but they also know that the sovereign love of God is striving to purify and unify the Church. To this end the Reformed Churches dedicate themselves to a vocation of constantly reforming the Church under the Word, and refusing to disrupt the unity of the Church for any cause short of the denial of God and Christ. They know that there is nothing final in the Presbyterian system; only God is ultimate. Therefore they steadfastly set themselves to the task of glorifying God in the thought and life of man by preaching, teaching, worshiping, and seeking to order the life of the Church and the society of men in accordance with the Word of God—the Alpha and Omega of history, the full height of whose grace and truth has been seen and heard in Jesus Christ.

³ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, IV, I, 7, translated by John Allen. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.

the Christian way | IX

Christian Behavior: Its Essential Presupposition—Theology

There are today ten persons who are vitally concerned about ethical questions for every two persons interested in theological questions. This is true of those within as well as those outside the Church. College students are generally responsive to discussions of personal (sex) or social (race) behavior, but tend to be impatient with the suggestion that such discussions must be preceded by a theological critique. Part of this impatience, at least among American students, can be credited to their congenitally pragmatic nature. Still, there is a deeper cause. It rests upon the fact that it was far from clear to their parents' generation that Christian ethics grow out of and must continue to be nourished in the soil of Christian theology. The ethical imperative (thou shalt) is rooted in biblical religion in the divine indicative (God has).

SIN AND FAITH. When Sören Kierkegaard declared that it is the most decisive of distinctions to recognize that the opposite of sin is not virtue but faith, he was emphasizing the uniquely grounded base of Christian ethics. Sin, which includes wrong behavior in thought and deed, inevitably arises wherever the thought and deed are not rooted in God's acts—in Paul's terms, "the mercies of God." Christian behavior grows out of and takes its form and content from the knowledge of what God has done in Jesus Christ. Humanistic ethics, most of which trace their origin from the ethical systems of Plato and Aristotle, are not rooted in the biblical facts. The sense of proportion, the golden mean of the Nicomachean Ethic of Aristotle, which is normative for individual behavior, grows out of a view of the relation of mind and body that is essentially unbiblical. Hence comes the shocking discovery for many that one can be quite virtuous when measured by a Greek ethic and yet be very much a sinner by a Christian ethic.

The Bible gives an answer to the question, What shall we do? but always it is in terms of God's love and justice which determines who we are. Unless we see ourselves in relation to God's creative and redemptive acts we may find that we are demanding of ourselves certain behavior which is impossible of achievement because of the limitations of our human nature. A Christian ethic which ignores its essential grounding in

Christian theology nurtures a community of neurotics and hypocrites. The continuing inability to fulfil what is understood to be the ethical demand piles guilt upon guilt. The rationalization of one's failures, which takes the form either of watering down the ethical demand or of contending that one has fulfilled the demand perfectly, breeds hypocrisy. A tragic example of the latter was revealed by a magazine survey some years ago. In response to the question, "Do you live by the law of love that Jesus proclaimed?" ninety percent of those responding gave a wholehearted "Yes!"

THEOLOGY, THEN ETHICS. The *locus classicus* of this essential priority of theology over ethics is Paul's letter to the Christian congregation at Rome. In this epistle Paul does not speak to the Romans about "the Christian way" until the twelfth chapter. Then he grounds his imperative ("present your bodies a living sacrifice") in the indicative ("I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God"). Since God has done what he has done in his merciful acts of calling Israel and sending Jesus Christ (chapters 1-11), the Christian, aware of these facts, ought to behave accordingly. Not only are these acts of God (i.e., these mercies) normative for Christian living, but response to these acts will alone provide the power to live the Christian way.

Christian Behavior: Its Basic Expression—Vocation

The Apostle Paul encourages his fellow Christians at Rome (or on our college campuses) to "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." If we indulge in daydreaming (or night dreaming) we may find ourselves facing decisions as to whether we should accept or refuse the nomination for the Presidency of the United States, shoot down one more enemy plane a la Walter Mitty or return to the base, marry the Hollywood queen or the girl back home, invest our millions in U. S. Steel or in A.T.&T. But the fact that we are "bodies" calls us back to reality again and again from this world which we create by our undisciplined imagination. We occupy a definite position in space (the campus) and a specific moment in time (post-World War II, twentieth century). It is where the body is, and not where the imagination is, that as Christians we are to become living documents revealing God's mercies in the way we treat ourselves (including our bodies) and the manner in which we relate ourselves to others. The Christian is to function responsibly within the context in which the body finds itself. We are always in a context of relationship with others, as children vis-a-vis parents, as students in relation to faculty, as sorority or fraternity members. In these relationships the body is to be a "living sacrifice." The Christian way is to be lived out in the decisions that arise in contacts with other "bodies" that make up our given world at any one time.

It is in this context that we find the basic vocation of the Christian: to be a witness to what God has done in Christ and is doing in the affairs of men and of nations today—and to be a witness where he is! The Christian is one who has heard the good news. He is called to proclaim it. In a certain sense he is “stuck” with the gospel. That is why Paul warned the Colossians that it is useless to try to go beyond the gospel, to improve it by adding Jewish or Gnostic embellishments. The gospel is what it is, and the Colossians who have heard it are stuck with it.

VOCATION AND VOCATIONS. It is the realization of this relationship between God in Christ and those whom he has called that lies behind Luther’s conception of vocation as doing whatever task one is engaged in, but doing it to the glory of God. There are no special occupations for Christians, not even that of the ministry. All earthly work is legitimate for those who follow the Carpenter of Nazareth.

In choosing a job today, unlike the Middle Ages, a large number of possibilities lie before us. We believe there is no *one* job which God wants a man to do, and we recognize that it is only specialization and custom in our society which set a man to only one type of work in a lifetime. These factors make a choice difficult. Natural endowments have to be taken into account, but they are not determinative. They have to be set over against the world’s needs. A student may have great talent for salesmanship and only average ability as a teacher. But when faced with the shortage of teachers, the Christian choice is obvious as over against, say, the promoting of sales of sterling silver car keys! Freedom to be oneself, a sense of creativity, participation in community—all these are factors in choosing a job. But the Christian recognizes in all these factors and in all decisions the corporate sin of mankind. The American student knows, or should know, that he participates in an economy built upon armaments and expendable goods in a world of starvation and need. He realizes that he is a part of this sin and that no easy escape is possible. But he will seek to be obedient, living in the daily necessity and presence of God’s forgiveness and grace.

The Necessity for Decision

“Be not conformed to this world,” the Apostle Paul writes. Do not conform to the ethos on sex or alcohol or race or “getting ahead” which prevails on your college campus, but “prove what is the will of God” and then do it.

Modern existentialism has helped us grasp anew the fact that life can be defined as “decisions.” You are what you do. To be free from the necessity of making decisions is to be dead. No one of us is free to be neutral in the matter of making decisions. Even though the “native hue of resolution [be] sicklied o’er with the pale cast of thought” (a

disease always threatening intellectuals), yet this too is a decision to make no decision in those situations where pro has qualified con, and con is set against pro. This is a decision *to avoid decision*.

It has always been true that the "masses" do not initiate their own decisions, and yet they decide not to decide for themselves. They are, as current sociological jargon puts it, "other-directed." They have decided to let others decide, but that too is a decision!

This being molded in ethical decisions by the group is very strong among young people. Forsyth has put it well when he writes:

Youth is a great coward in matters of form, propriety, or ritual, as practised by his school, his set, or his class. Traction-engines will not drag from the schoolboy treason to his class, which may yet be owed by duty to his teacher. There is no social ritualist like the undergraduate. From that early stage most uneducated people, and very many who pass for educated, never emerge. They are simply indices of the tradition or *milieu* that lies nearest them at their plastic time—at best, of the spirit of their own age. And, even when they assail the long tradition of the past, it is mainly as the organs of the inferior tradition called fashion.¹

CONFORMITY. There are two basic reasons for conformity to "this world." The most obvious is the desire to be a member of the group or the gang. Public opinion (or campus opinion) is a terrible tyrant, yet there is a deeper source feeding conformity, of which going with the majority may only be the symptom. It is the fear that accompanies genuine freedom. Sören Kierkegaard has made what is certainly one of the most profound studies of the anxiety that accompanies freedom in his book *The Concept of Dread*. He defines "dread" as the "possibility of freedom." A creative ethical response—that is, a response not hammered out on the anvil of some legalistic or moralistic code—produces dread precisely because it is an expression of freedom, which means its results are undetermined before it actually becomes a decision. The root of the dread, according to Kierkegaard, is the possibility of becoming guilty—the decision may prove to be a wrong decision. Christian ethics are ethics of freedom, and therefore it is precisely here that we see how essential Christian theology is to the development of a Christian ethic. If one is not to remain determined by a legalistic or moralistic ethic (in either a Greek or a Pharisaic sense) then the theology of the Atonement is the essential foundation for a Christian ethic. Kierkegaard expresses this centrality of theology to ethic when he concludes his analysis of the psychological problem of dread accompanying the threat of freedom with these words, "He who with respect to guilt is educated by dread [i.e., by the possibility of freedom] will therefore repose only in atonement."²

¹ P. T. Forsyth, *The Principle of Authority*, Independent Press, London. U. S. Distributor Allenson, Naperville, Illinois.

² Sören Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Dread*, p. 145. Princeton University Press, 1944.

If there is therefore to be a truly Christian commitment, it must take place in the context of a knowledge of the theology of reconciliation. Such knowledge is the *sine qua non* of a genuine Christian commitment, indeed of any *Christian* ethic.

THE FAMILY AND CHOICE. Every relationship in life calls for some decision. In the life of the student the question of his relationship to his parents arises when he enters the college scene. For most students this is the first experience of a sustained freedom from parental oversight. Tensions between parent and student become aggravated at this time, partly due to the fact that the process of severing the psychical umbilical cord should reach its conclusion in these years, but also due to the fact that the student is confronted with dimensions of reality which contradict his parental training or which may never have been known to the parents. The problem of guilt feelings arises here, especially for those imbued with the ideal of the Decalogue's admonition to "honor father and mother." A certain amount of unresolved tension is inevitable at this point, and the student must recognize that this is the price of becoming a person in his own right. However, certain perspectives may mitigate the strain. The student should be helped to criticize his own competency. The ambiguities surrounding his own commitments and perspectives should help him to recognize that his parents also were and are faced with the same ambiguities in relation to decisions they have made concerning his own upbringing and their own philosophy of life. This consciousness of the complexity of life ought to mitigate excessive condemnation of his parents.

What makes up the tragic character of the ethical life is the fact that ethical decisions must be made quite often in cases where the decision is not between a good and an evil choice but between the greater of two goods or the lesser of two evils. The obligation of child to parent vis-a-vis the obligation of integrity concerning what one feels to be the truth; one's responsibility to one's vocation and one's family vis-a-vis the call to service in areas of political or social concern—these are illustrations of loyalties in which there is no blueprint for decision. Ethical decisions in such situations call for a twofold effort. On the one hand, they demand a consideration of the problem faced in the light of the knowledge and research available on the matter in question. Here the student can be helped to see the relevance of the various academic disciplines concerning, for example, political and economic problems. It is at this point that fidelity to his academic work should appear not only a necessity for his future vocation but a responsibility of his Christian conscience. The Christian student, in compiling data to throw light on his decisions, will always be concerned to include the insights available from the academic disciplines which are relevant to the subject matter calling for decision.

But a Christian ethic will not end here; the decision will be informed also by those motifs peculiar to a Christian ethic. The ethical decision will also take account of the particular *kairos* in which one is living, and most of all view the decision in the light of the knowledge that Jesus Christ is risen and reigns as Lord.

THE INTERIOR GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. Competency in the particular area in which ethical decisions must be made (i.e., a knowledge of economics, political science, nuclear physics, or experimental psychology, et cetera) must be coupled with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Christian lives in the time between the decisive act of God in Christ and the culmination of the working out of God's purpose which was declared in Jesus Christ. The leading agent, so to speak, in this period, is the Holy Spirit. It is the guidance of the Spirit that must in the final analysis give direction to the ethical decision. Here a Reformed ethic must stress that the Holy Spirit is not unmediated in an anabaptist sense, but operates in the Body of Christ—the Church—and through the witness of the scriptures.

Critical Areas for Decisions

SEX. The ancient and honorable question of sex provides one of the most existential areas for Christian ethics to be faced by the student. One New Testament scholar, who has had many contacts with college students, remarked recently that he thought much of the college student's rebellion or indifference to religion is only a front for the disturbing factor which his religion introduces in the area of sex. The Church has failed to provide courageous guidance in this field either because it has failed to wrestle with a Christian sexual ethic or because it continues to possess a sexual ethic more Greek than biblical in substance. Much of our Protestant sexual ethic is only a watered-down version of Roman Catholicism. The dualism of body and soul which enters Roman Catholic sexual ethics through Thomas Aquinas is a Greek inheritance. The Bible knows no such dualism; sex is not sin, though sex, like every other aspect of human life, is an occasion for sin. It is essential that a Christian ethic make clear the biblical sense of the conflict of "flesh and spirit" and rescue the word "flesh" from its Greek overtones. The whole area of sexual ethics must be evaluated in terms of the biblical meaning of persons. Here the tradition of "I—Thou" which began with Martin Buber's work should be most helpful.

JUSTICE AND LOVE. The inadequacy of so much Christian thinking on ethical problems becomes most glaring in the area of dealing with the relation of justice and love. Either the love commandment which summarizes the Decalogue becomes absolutized in such a manner that it becomes irrelevant to the pressing problems of state and society,

or its function as the ultimate criterion over every ethical decision is lost; then the relatively valid decisions made in the name of Christian concern are absolutized and hence become demonic. Particularly, though not exclusively, in the area of social ethics the Christian community needs to clarify its thinking about the relation of love and justice. The love commandment is relevant only for the Christian community. Its fulfilment demands resources of grace that are available only to those who know about and respond to God's "mercies" in Jesus Christ. But the Christian's ethical responsibility extends beyond the Body of Christ to include the society of which he is also a member. In this society the Christian becomes irrelevant if he insists that ethical decisions must be made in the light of the love commandment, because this commandment is susceptible of fulfilment only by those who are "in Christ." There is a lower criterion—the criterion of "justice"—which is acceptable both to him and to society, and he must hammer out many of his ethical responses in the light of this concept of justice. The leavening influence of the Christian community on campus or in town politics should be evident, however, in this; all decisions made in the name of justice will, though tentatively supported by the Christian community, yet be held in tension by that community because the justice will be seen to fall short of the reality of love—i.e., all justice is seen by the Christian to be less than pure justice. He knows that it contains an ideological taint (Marx) or a subtle rationalization (Freud).

This analysis of justice and love does not mean to suggest, however, that—if it were possible—supposing the social or economic policies could be formulated exclusively by the Christian community, there would be pure justice in the regulation of interests. The members of the Christian community are themselves subject still to the viruses of ideology and rationalization (for example, the stand of many Christians on apartheid in South Africa or segregation in the northern and southern parts of the United States). This fact of the persistence of sin in the life of the redeemed necessitates rounding out any evaluation of the scope and validity of Christian ethics with a reference to the meaning of Christian eschatology. In the interim period Christians will find the courage to be and act only on the basis of the reality to which these words of H. R. Mackintosh concerning Karl Barth refer:

He takes his point of departure in justification by faith; that is to say, he makes it clear that righteousness—i.e., being right with God—is the beginning of everything, not the hard-won goal of interminable but sisyphian effort. The really good man is the man whose conscience has been comforted and his will fortified by submitting to have his sins forgiven for Christ's sake. Not ethical autonomy is the watchword, but obedience to the Word of God, speaking in a man's heart to disclose to him his duty for the actual or existential moment through which he is living. This is what dependence on God means, rather than ethical programmes, or

assorted moral precepts, or even the effort meticulously to imitate Jesus.³

RESPONSIBILITY TO NEIGHBOR. For whom is the Christian responsible? The obvious answer to this question is "the neighbor." But who is my neighbor? The neighbor is the man or woman for whom Jesus Christ died, which is to say, Everyman. God so loved, not a few men here and there, but the world! God was in Christ reconciling, not a few men here and there, but the world. An idealistic interpretation of the neighbor as Everyman often lends to the incongruous situation of persons about whom it can be said, "He loves all mankind, but finds it hard to love the individual in particular." The concern for the neighbor is to be expressed by the concern for the mission enterprise of the Church, for what greater gift has one to offer the neighbor than the gospel? But the concern for the neighbor will be primarily the concern for those who are near at hand, for one's geographical and social neighbors. The neighbor is every person whom I encounter in the routine of my life.

The Means of Grace

We have seen that a Christian ethic must issue from Christian theology. We have noted that the normative interpretation of the heart of the Christian message is the reality behind the expression "justification by faith." It is more than a systematic coincidence that John Calvin in the *Institutes* entitles the chapter following his discussion of justification by faith as follows: "On Prayer, the Chief Exercise of Faith and the Means of Our Daily Reception of Divine Grace." Justification is the act of God which is the indispensable foundation for Christian ethics. Prayer is the inevitable response of one's having been grasped by the meaning of justification. What air is to the life of the body, the devotional life is to the life of the "new being" which God has called into life through Jesus Christ.

SANCTIFICATION. Perhaps we can best grasp the necessity for the devotional life's providing the basis for our everyday living by viewing it under the heading of the technical term "sanctification." The destiny to which we are called in Christ is to become like him. The fact of our justification does not mean that we are no longer sinners, but it brings us into a right relationship with God in spite of our sin. To what end does God enter into fellowship with us? To enable us to participate in his power that we might become new creatures (in Tillich's terms, "a new being"). That is our destiny, but the word "destiny" implies a process toward that goal. Sanctification is the process in the Christian's

³ H. R. Mackintosh, *Types of Modern Theology*, p. 319. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

life in which he more and more does by *inclination* what he started out doing as a *duty*. When our redemption is complete (our reconciliation was completed on the cross) we will share our Lord's human nature. This transformation is not completed in this life (God save us from those who assume that it is!), and hence the Christian life is a life of discipline, of the fulfilling of one's duty. To the extent to which we do not yet share our Lord's nature, to that extent duty must be a central concept in the Christian life. In the life of the Christian there is a warfare between his inclination to follow the "devices and desires of his own heart" and his duty to be obedient to the will of God in Christ. If he is to be victorious in the warfare, if he is to be concerned about justice for others in social, political, and racial issues, if he is to find the courage not to be "conformed to this world," then he must root his daily life in Bible study and prayer and be faithful in receiving the sacraments of the Word and the elements. To assume that he is equal to the call of responsibility which God places on him, apart from faithful use of these means of grace, is only to declare that in fact his self-understanding has not been the fruit of his participation in the reality of justification!

DEVOTIONAL LIFE. The life of devotion is essential for the Christian if he is to avoid being a "stumbling block to his brother." In this connection the Christian community is in need of wrestling anew with the ethical responsibility of the "weak and the strong" as indicated in the section on ethics in Paul's Letter to the Romans. In an age threatened by conformity a Christian ethic must guard against being influenced by this passion for conformity. It should come as a refreshing breath of air for students (and many others) to know that essential to a Christian ethic is the fact that there is no binding ethical pattern for every individual. The value of the individual is not only affirmed in the doctrine of salvation but should be carried through in the doctrine of the ethical life.

Prayer often seems unreal to the student. Part of this unreality is due to the lack of reality in his own view of life. As Reinhold Niebuhr once expressed it, "Nothing is so irrelevant as the answer to an unasked question." The life of prayer and the practice of worship both are related to some of the questions which many students have not asked. But another reason is also relevant here. Many Christians find unreality in prayer because they are not "themselves" when they pray. They pose in prayer, they do not understand God's nature as *agape*, and hence there is an inner check on their complete openness before God. One cannot pray as the self one really is unless one first understands that whoever and whatever one is, he is accepted. This knowledge is irreversibly prior to the ability to pray and worship aright, because it is only with this knowledge that one is able to be oneself in prayer or see oneself as the subject speaking wholeheartedly in worship, as well as the one spoken

to in worship. In other words, there is unreality in prayer just as there is in ethics where both forms of human expression are not hammered out on the anvil of the meaning of "justification by faith."

The Apostle Paul encouraged the Christian congregation in Galatia to "do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith." The fellow member of the Body of Christ should have priority in Christian loyalty and affection. This sounds strange to many today, almost as if it encourages self-centeredness on the part of the Christian congregation. But let us examine the background of the claim that Christians have upon one another.

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to persuade a man that "he is the last, and the least, and the lost."⁴ It is the work of the Holy Spirit to unveil—perhaps in what Kierkegaard calls each man's midnight hour—the hidden egoism that drives him in his pursuit of knowledge, prestige, and most painfully in the pursuit of piety. These experiences are part of the inevitable pain that accompanies the process of sanctification. Hence they are unique to the Body of Christ.

Nietzsche has grasped the source of the pain that accompanies membership in the Body of Christ. In *Thus Spake Zarathustra* one of the characters is designated the "murderer of God." In defense of his action the man protests:

"But he—had to die; he looked with eyes which behold everything—he beheld men's depths and dregs, all his hidden ignominy and ugliness."

Zarathustra sympathizes when he replies:

"Thou couldst not endure him who beheld thee—who ever beheld thee through and through."⁵

The Christian will have a special concern for his fellow Christian precisely because he knows of the pain the other is undergoing in the unmasking which is essential to the new life in Christ. The Christian, as Martin Luther expressed it, is to be a "Christ" to his neighbor, not exclusively to his Christian neighbor, but first of all to his Christian neighbor because he knows the unique tribulation ("in the world *you* shall have tribulation") that is inseparably bound with the Christian life.

THE CHURCH AND THE SACRAMENTS. Membership in the Body of Christ—the Church—is not an option for the Christian. In being grasped by the meaning of his justification in Christ, he is at the same time placed in the Church.

Life in the fellowship of believers is essential to living the Christian

⁴ Alec Vidler, *Christian Belief*, p. 68. London: SCM Press, 1950.

⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Philosophy of Nietzsche*. London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd.

way. This is true in the first place because the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed through the sacrament of the Word and of the bread and wine. The Christian must be continually nourished on these sacraments because he stands in need of forgiveness, and only as he has the assurance of forgiveness can he become objective about his ethical decisions—personal and social. If it should happen that he is led to believe that his relationship to God stands or falls with the rightness of his ethical decisions, then he is led into a labyrinth of self-deceit and rationalization which is bound to make his ethical judgments warped, since in his judgments he sees his eternal destiny at stake. The knowledge of and participation in the reality of the forgiveness of sins ought to make it possible for the Christian community to abandon all moral juggling and to face reality just as it is. It is the function of the Church, as Calvin has said, to proclaim the forgiveness of sins.

The Church is a means of grace also in that it carries within its treasury the wisdom of tradition. In their reaction against the Roman Catholic Church's treatment of tradition, some Protestant communions have tended to deny the rightful place of tradition in the life of the Church. If we decided to have no other criterion than that of "counting noses," it would seem only democratic to give the vast majority of mankind (i.e., the dead) at least one vote in the deliberations of the minority (i.e., the living). This vote would consist of listening to what other members of the Body of Christ have said concerning the meaning of the gospel as well as the meaning of the Christian life and the opportunities and dangers involved in expressing this life in the society in which one lives. This tradition, which is in the keeping of the Church, is invaluable in the area of Christian ethics, provided it always serves as a milestone and not as a millstone about the neck of the contemporary generation of Christians.

the Christian faith in higher education

X

On the Campus

The context in which the Christian student and scholar seek to live in response to God is the academic community, variously labeled in America a school, college, or university. To be responsible to God there requires not simply an abstract knowledge of Christian doctrine and ethics, but some understanding of the particular context and the relevance of the Christian message in it. For as the Christian in the field of law must have a clear grasp of the judicial system and court procedures, and the Christian in politics must understand the power of structure in which he is working, the Christian in the university must have some grasp of the nature and purpose of this institution.

The concern to clarify and articulate the *raison d'être* of the university has been labeled—in SCM circles, at least—the “university question.” It is not so much a question addressed *to* the university by outsiders demanding “What are you?” or the question of faculty curriculum committees asking themselves, “What is happening here?” but the concern of Christian students and faculty who are *within* the university, identified with it, but who can also stand apart from it, measuring it by some transcendent standard.

In making an appraisal of the university, we cannot be content with the usual standards for evaluation such as the catalogue statements of trustees, the oratory of commencement speakers, or the clichés of alumni magazines. Nor are we helped by comparing specialized American higher education with the medieval *universitas* of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

And yet, as Christians who believe that the university is not simply an accident of history but a unique order in God’s creation, we do have a right to pose certain questions about the faithfulness of the university to its calling and the integrity of its response to a God who is Lord of Truth.¹ These questions we pose not as a loyalty check for the university but to remind ourselves of the tradition in which the university stands and the responsibility we share as participants in it. In this sense our discussion of the “university question” is never a polemic aimed or shouted

¹ See Baly, Denis, *Chosen Peoples*, Christian Education Press, 1956, Chapter IV, for a helpful statement of the place of the university in God’s scheme.

at the university, but always a conversation *within* the university community.

Special Concerns of Christians

Instead of asking the university to justify its existence in terms of how many religion courses it offers, the encouragement it gives to extracurricular religious activities, or how many Christians are on the faculty, we work as Christians within the university, helping it to be true to its heritage as "*a community of persons united in the rational pursuit of the truth.*"² This gives to the Christian on the campus—be he faculty, student, or administration—a special concern in crucial areas.

THE WHOLENESS OF TRUTH. Christians affirm that though there are many different truths and fragments of knowledge, ultimately these fit together within the framework of Christian Truth; that there is a consistency to truth which means it is not ultimately many but one. So in the midst of those who think of truth as just something to be memorized, or a method to be followed, or just facts in contrast to values, we see truth as something which changes us, makes demands upon us; as something to be done, Someone to be known. Truth, in these terms, is whatever helps us understand more clearly the nature of the universe and our relationship to what is ultimate within it.

Such an understanding of truth demands an appreciation for all approaches to truth, whether found in the physics lab, math class, music seminar, or Bible study group. So, among those who would consciously or unconsciously absolutize *their* method or discipline as the *only* one leading to truth, we insist upon the power of God to work throughout creation, and we covet any new insight into truth from whatever source.

The biblical view of man's sin leads us also to recognize our capacities to misuse and distort truth. In contrast to those who would shut out, ignore, or deny the validity of certain positions, we insist upon the honest presentation of all alternatives, knowing that truth emerges only through the checking and balancing of the perverted truths of individuals. The heretic "is needed both as a test and as a contributor. . . . 'No one . . . can have the whole truth and there is no one who may not become to us a vehicle of God's truth.'"³

This would place Christians behind every effort to create the conditions for a dialectical process at the heart of higher education. Such a dialectic would force out into the open for scrutiny and debate the presuppositions that frequently lie unexpressed behind the claims of other

² J. Robert Nelson, editor, *The Christian Student and the University*, p. 29. New York: Association Press, 1952. See the chapter by William Poteat, pp. 28-48, for one of the best explications of this definition in print.

³ Moberly, Sir Walter, *The Crisis in the University*, S.C.M. Press, London. U. S. Distributor Allenson, Naperville, Illinois.

faiths. It would also force Christians who frequently have made casual or emotionally based commitments into a radical examination of their faith. It would then become obvious that we need the discipline of having our faith buffeted about in an open market place of ideas. Our faith is too often a hothouse creation, unexposed to the rigors of analysis and untested in the turmoil of debate.

All the implications of such a view of truth for the Church's mission on the campus are too numerous to detail here. But the demand this places upon campus Christian programs and study groups to provide a setting to discern the coherence and integration of truth, the responsibility to insist upon and protect academic freedom, and the need to sharpen up all possible alternatives—these cannot be avoided if we take seriously the Christian understanding of truth.

THE INEVITABILITY OF COMMITMENT. Recent analyses of the university from a Christian perspective have insisted upon the necessity of the commitments of faculty and students to *some* ultimate standards. The handling of truth (even as mere facts and figures) necessitates a certain selectivity and delimiting process which is decided upon the basis of certain presuppositions. "This notion that we can teach without any biases is surely one of the most dubious assumptions of contemporary education . . . it would be very difficult for four people to give an 'objective' account of the meaning of the Protestant Reformation if those four people were (a) a Jesuit, (b) a Calvinist, (c) a Marxist, and (d) a Unitarian. What we would get would be descriptions going something like this: the Reformation was (a) a sinful repudiation of mother Church, (b) a purifying recovery of the true life of the Church, (c) an economically motivated revolt, and (d) a new stifling of the intellect after an initial attempt to throw off the shackles of medieval authoritarianism."⁴

Amid false claims to objectivity and unwarranted attacks on commitment, the Christian community on campus persists in smoking out all presuppositions, "hold[ing] them up for examination . . . [raising] the really important question: 'Which presuppositions are true? Which ones are worth working for, living for, perhaps even dying for?'"⁵

Such commitment does not preclude a search for fuller truth, for to be committed to the Lord of Truth is to be unafraid of where such a search may lead. The Christian can be open and responsive and inquiring precisely because of his commitment which frees him for the investigation of truth in all areas.

The implications of such an understanding of commitment for the Church's mission on the campus are several: Students should be helped

⁴ R. M. Brown, "The Reformed Tradition and Higher Education," *The Christian Scholar*, Vol. XLI, No. 1, March, 1958, pp. 26-27.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

in formulating the key questions to pursue in each discipline (e.g., concerning the nature of man in sociology, anthropology, and psychology; concerning creation and causation in chemistry, physics, biology, et cetera) in lectures, class discussions, or term papers.⁶ Faculty speakers can help in sharpening up this problem either in their reluctance to reveal their own presuppositions or in their honesty in questioning the false objectivity of others. The need for commitment to something can be the basis for new growth in the Christian faith, in clarifying that to which we are committed.

WHOLENESS OF PERSONS. The biblical view of man as a unity of mind, body, and soul gives us a concern for what is happening to individuals within the university, to the kinds of pressures that destroy or build a sense of wholeness in persons. The fragmentation and compartmentalization of the curriculum and the way university life is divided into segments (so many hours for classes, study, extracurriculars, dating, and church) tend to divide individuals' values and standards as well as their time. In the midst of this piecemeal approach, the Christian community on the campus talks not only about the coherence of truth but also about the need for wholeness in persons. It must help individuals so to know God's grace and acceptance that they can accept themselves and be the same self in various situations.

In this mission the Christian community speaks a word of judgment upon any part of campus life which encourages superficiality and false role playing, and it cultivates all occasions where persons can find coherence and meaning in their college experience. The concept of Christian vocation has great relevance here in its insistence upon the present dimension of the Christian students' responsibility to God, that not simply in the future but at this moment they are called to glorify God with their minds through their academic work.⁷

TRUE COMMUNITY. As Christians who know the meaning of membership in the covenant community and of acceptance based not upon conformity but upon acceptance by God revealed in Jesus Christ, we work within the university, questioning the shallow "groupiness" and "togetherness" based upon conformity which often passes for community in fraternities, sororities, and campus clubs. At the same time, we cultivate every means possible for strengthening the sense of community among faculty, students, and administration across departmental lines, developing the kind of atmosphere of openness and acceptance which dis-

⁶ See Fairchild, H. N., *Religious Perspectives in College Teaching*, Ronald Press, 1952, for attempts at the relationship between Christian faith and various academic disciplines. These attempts vary in quality and success.

⁷ For other treatment of the student's vocation, see Chapter IX, "The Christian Way," and Chapter XII, "Communicating the Christian Faith."

tinguishes the true Christian community from all others. This entails an openness in membership, in attitude toward the university, and in language and experience which stems from our concern to meet persons wherever they are, at whatever level of faith they come.⁸ Membership in the Westminster Fellowship is based not upon orthodoxy or adherence to certain moral regulations, but upon a person's sincere desire to participate in a community of seekers after the truth.

The Church, the University, and Christian Education

With these concerns the Church works on the campus not as a rival to classwork, shouting that faith is better than *reason* or that those inside the Church are saved and those outside are not. Nor does it work as one more campus activity competing for students' time, another side show along the extracurricular midway. Where a campus religious fellowship takes students away from their books or the lab and sets them to running the mimeograph or planning square dances, it is being unfaithful not only to its own calling but to the nature of the academic community in which it works.

EDUCATION WITH MEANING. Rather, the Church is at work within the university to make clear the basic concerns noted above about the nature of *truth, commitment, persons, and community* which are not inconsistent with but actually essential to the fulfilment of the university's task. Put another way, the Church is involved in higher education to help students get a Christian education, i.e., an education in which a person is enabled to see all truths and facts in relation to the biblical truth and the fact of Jesus Christ and is freed to live as a whole person and to participate responsibly in the covenant community, the Church.⁹

Such an education is judged Christian not by how many courses in religion it includes, but by the person's ability to discern wholeness amid apparent fragmentation and brokenness, to see the relation between various kinds of truths, and to discover the meaning beneath surface trivialities. Christian education is judged relevant not by proficiency in giving Catechism answers, but by the ability to raise the right questions, i.e., questions which push through to what ultimately affects man's relationship to God.

TOWARD TRANSFORMATION OF CULTURE. The Church finds its life and fulfils its mission not simply in academic affairs but also in its involvement in campus affairs, student government,

⁸ See article in *Student World*, No. 3, 1954, "The S.C.M. as an Open Community."

⁹ For a statement of a mutually beneficial relationship between Church and university, see the pamphlet "The University and the Church" by Harold K. Schilling, dean of the Graduate School of Pennsylvania State University, published by the Department of Campus Christian Life, Board of Christian Education, United Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. Philadelphia.

dorm life, et cetera, wherever students are witnessing to what it means to be the people of God. The question of the relationship between the Church and the university must be faced within the context of a thorough wrestling with the question of Christ and culture. It is particularly important that we be aware of what Richard Niebuhr has called the "polarity" and "transformation" positions. It would seem that the latter position is most consistent with Reformed theology and history. But it ought to be borne in mind that in this position it is Christ and not the Church who is the primary transformer of culture. The Church exists to bear witness to Christ's redemptive and transforming power, expressing in its own life the reality of this transformation.¹⁰ If we take seriously the Church's role as "transformer"¹¹ this does away with the dichotomy between the sacred and the secular, between the Church and the campus, and recognizes that the campus Christian fellowship is—at one and the same time—the "gathered" and "scattered" community of faith which cannot withdraw because of its involvement in the university. In this sense, the Church in the university is not simply a *place* to go or an *activity* to participate in, but something to *be* in all parts of campus life.¹²

ECUMENICAL WITNESS ON THE CAMPUS. The world mission of the Church is represented in an unprecedented way on many American campuses today. Carefully selected students from abroad who will fill key leadership positions in their nations' internal and international affairs in years to come are found in great numbers in our colleges and universities. Many of these overseas students are Christians. From them we can learn much about the gospel; with them we can experience new depths of what is meant by Christian *koinonia*. Overseas students, who are our new neighbors in today's "small world," may be, in Barth's terms, the neighbor given by God to preach the gospel to us. Many of these students are not Christians. To expose them to every other facet of our culture save the religious, for fear of alienating or proselytizing, is to present an incomplete and therefore false picture of our culture and to miss a unique opportunity for Christian obedience and discipleship.

Historical Background

In its work within and relation to American universities, the Church has assumed a variety of roles and relationships. In the earliest American colleges, founded by "pious and learned gentlemen with earnest Christian

¹⁰ See H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951.

¹¹ See paper by John E. Cantelon, "Christianity and the University," in "Nexus," Winter, 1958, for an interesting application of Niebuhr's "Christ and Culture" categories to the university. Department of Campus Christian Life, Board of Christian Education, United Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. Philadelphia.

¹² See paper by J. E. Dirks, "Obedience and Freedom of the People of God in the Academic World," pp. 6-7. Department of Campus Christian Life, Philadelphia.

concerns," the administrations were assumed to be mainly responsible for campus religious life. As the intellectual and religious climate changed with the Enlightenment near the end of the eighteenth century, these official religious efforts decreased until any informal meetings of campus Christians were the exception.¹³

Early in the nineteenth century, however, the evangelical revivals sweeping America reached the campuses, leading not only to a new life in college Christian societies but also to a new missionary zeal to strengthen the world-wide mission of the Church. Thus, by mid-twentieth century a variety of Christian groups could be found, including groups for theological debating, devotions, missions, and ethical living.

The first college YMCA was founded at the University of Virginia in 1858 to join these various concerns within one campus organization. Other similar groups were soon organized, so that forty college Y's were represented in the Louisville Convention which organized the Intercollegiate YMCA Movement. By 1886 the national Intercollegiate YWCA had been formed, and these two movements have worked closely together ever since. By the end of the century, the Y had become the most influential force in student life on many campuses.

Similar religious stirrings had been taking place in universities throughout the world, making possible the formation of the World's Student Christian Federation in 1895 under the leadership of John R. Mott of the American Student YMCA. From the handful of charter student Christian movements the WSCF has grown until its operations extend to fifty-seven countries.

The increase in college enrollments, a realization by the denominations that an increasing number of their youth were in state and private institutions, not church schools, and the conviction that the Y could not alone meet this numerical and spiritual need led to the formation of denominational foundations on the campuses, beginning in 1907. This development was encouraged by the establishment of church student centers and enlarged sanctuaries near these campuses, employment of trained personnel to work with students, and the development of self-conscious denominational student fellowships and intercollegiate movements.

As these movements developed, coordinating efforts among the several movements—once handled exclusively through the collegiate Y's—assumed ever larger proportions, leading to the establishment of three regional cooperating SCM's and efforts to coordinate at a functional level in the 1930's. The desire of the denominational movements to affiliate with the WSCF, together with that body's reluctance to affiliate more than *one* American movement (then the Intercollegiate YM-YWCA), led eventually to the formation of the United Student Christian Council

¹³ "United States Student Christian Movements," *Information Service*, Bureau of Research and Survey, NCCC, Vol. XXXV, No. 41, p. 1.

in 1944 as the organization to coordinate the existing student Christian movements in America. After the establishment of the National Council of Churches in 1950, USCC became affiliated with it through its Department of Campus Christian Life, alongside the emerging Faculty Christian Fellowship.

Subsequently a number of USCC member movements, impatient with USCC's inability to be much more than a coordinating council without direct state or local affiliation, instigated a movement toward merger into a single Student Christian Movement, inviting all movements who could to participate in what is called the United Campus Christian Fellowship.

THE PRESENT SITUATION. Patterns of work vary on American campuses, depending upon size, region, and the nature of the school. In small church-related colleges, a single Student Christian Association, often affiliated with the National Student Councils of the Y's, is the on-campus religious group. On the larger state university campuses, the Y's and denominational groups are usually coordinated by an official "coordinator of religious activities" or an Interreligious or Ecumenical Council. Unique plans of interfaith and ecumenical work which deserve special mention have been developed at Pennsylvania State University and Cornell.

In pluralistic university structures the Presbyterian Campus Christian Life ministry seeks to work for any organizational pattern which will make possible the honest expression of all positions. It questions any easily bought harmony or pattern of cooperation which glosses over differences, and encourages such tri-faith and ecumenical encounters which elicit the best contribution of the participating groups. Religious Emphasis Weeks, service projects, observance of the Universal Day of Prayer for Students, and study groups are the usual means employed for providing such encounters, where students are brought to a deeper understanding of their own faith through confrontation with the views of others who will speak the truth in love.

Reformed Contribution

The churches of the Reformed tradition bring to the ecumenical movement no set answers or neat pattern for organization. They do bring, however, certain convictions about the nature of the Church and its mission in the world. These are an integral part of our contribution to the ecumenical enterprise.

1. The Church is constituted around the word of God—written, preached, and sacramental. Hence, an emphasis upon Bible study and corporate worship are essential ingredients of the Westminster Fellowship's work on the campus.

2. The Church is not apart from or against the world but *in* it and

seeking to transform it. Hence, a concern for the relation of Christ and culture and a continuing relating of the scriptures to current social problems are found in every Westminster Fellowship worthy of its Reformed tradition.

3. The Church is equally dependent upon ministry and laymen for its life and leadership. Hence, the campus Christian fellowship seeks to provide experiences in churchmanship through its visitation evangelism program, every-member canvass, communicants' classes, student-governed groups, et cetera.

4. The Church exists only in and through its mission in the world. Hence, a realization that all parts of the Church's life must reflect its missionary calling and that all parts of the world—geographical and cultural—are the Church's concern dominates the program of a Presbyterian campus fellowship.

5. The Church—though broken and divided—is one in its God-given unity. Hence, the campus center works not to create unity but to make evident the unity which has already been given to us in Jesus Christ, breaking down every man-made barrier to acceptance and oneness and establishing those situations and structures where our oneness can be experienced as a reality.

The Current Unconcern Among Students

One of the first notions that must be discarded in working with students in this country is that "students are liberal," that they are concerned about social issues and are so disposed to act. In other parts of the world students are very much involved in social upheaval. There were "Freedom Fighters" in the streets of Budapest, insurgents in Buenos Aires, and demonstrators in Caracas. On our campuses there are occasional "panty raids" or grandiose water fights out on the main drag, but American students rarely fight or demonstrate for anything except, perhaps, more parking space. As Philip Jacob has documented, American students can, to a considerable and significant degree, be characterized as "conservative."

But such a statement can be misleading if we think this means that students tend to stand, as a group, for a particular political philosophy or economic theory, such as the *noblesse oblige* of the old Bourbons or the *laissez faire* economics of Adam Smith. Their conservatism stems from their "glorious contentment" and their almost compulsive anxiety not to be "square" or different from the group. It is one thing to read about this sort of thing in Jacob, Riesman, Whyte, and the rash of magazine articles dealing with the "silent," the "beat," and the "shook-up" generation, and to accept the evidence intellectually. It is another thing to start working on a campus and run head-on into the problem.

Those who read some of the above-mentioned material and then meet for the first time with a group of intelligent and sensitive students often conclude that "It isn't so." That is, in effect, what one of the ablest Southern journalists did in a recent piece entitled "What Beat Generation?" But what happens if we refuse to believe that students are socially indifferent? We proceed to deal with the "Really Big Social Questions of Our Time": the halting of nuclear bomb tests, civil rights and academic freedom, world peace, reciprocal trade agreements, housing, desegregation and integration. But we will probably find only mild interest in any of these topics, and then only if we resort to clever and interesting program techniques—that is, if the program is attractively packaged. Of course, it is possible to get through the façade of complacency and touch a real nerve of concern in students, but it is exceedingly unlikely that this will happen in the usual Sunday-night-

program approach. Students will listen politely, for a little while at least, but they are not likely to see what we are driving at or why *they* should be concerned. And it is certain they will not be much tempted to do anything about whatever it is that is being discussed. Any concern to "change the world" is both *passé* and in bad taste, in the current student mind.

FAILURE TO ACT. Difficulties will generally arise when the attempt is made to get students to act—especially if such action involves the risk of personal security. There will be lonely exceptions who stand apart from the crowd on every campus, but they *are* exceptions and even they, of course, are bound up with this conformist culture—just as their pastors are.

In a country where we have for generations thought of the university campus as the crucible where new ideas and new hopes were forged into being, and where we have thought of students as buoyant—sometimes even rash—young liberals who could translate these new vistas into a social reality, it is disturbing to find unconcern and cynicism. But it would seem evident that American students, on the whole, are virtually devoid of a social conscience. Hence, it is imperative as we work with students and faculty in the area of "The Christian in Society" that we be *contemporary* in our approach.

A CONTEMPORARY APPROACH. We are dealing with the post-World War Two student generation, as described earlier in this book.¹ Most of the thinking and writing we have in the area of Christian social ethics was forged out during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—the old "social gospel" as defined by Walter Rauschenbusch and refined and deepened by John Bennett and Reinhold Niebuhr. This material, I think, is not relevant to students of the nineteen fifties and sixties in the same way it was to students of the nineteen thirties and forties. We in America are dealing on a mass scale with probably the most sheltered and privileged generation of students in the history of the world. But not only are they overprotected and essentially ingrown, they are also spiritually and philosophically "lost" or, perhaps better, "bewildered."

These students cannot be expected to respond to political philosophies and programs as did earlier student generations which were in a kind of "righteous rebellion" against the social irrelevance of a pietism in which they were still essentially rooted. These former student generations may have been naive, but they were considerably more "grounded" than students today. What they, or the elite among them, needed most was a sophisticated and workable rationale for political and social action on

¹ Chapter II, "The Situation: Values and Attitudes of American Students."

the basis of which they, as individuals, could work effectively within the power structures of society. And, of course, this is what early twentieth-century Christian ethicists pre-eminently provided for them.

Students today are not so much in need of a rationale, as a first consideration, as they are in need of a *raison d'être*. They may not be primarily in need of an answer to the question, How shall we do it? but in need of answers to the much deeper questions, Why do anything at all? Who are we? What are we here for?

This is simply to say that the students with whom we are called upon to share in a campus ministry are a "peculiar people," isolated in time and in space from the outward pain of this world, yet deeply and quietly disturbed by an inner pain they do not know how to express. They cannot be treated as though they were students of the Depression or the war years. We must relate to them, sensitively, as they are—as students who desperately need to find themselves and to "be found," or to be gripped by a gospel that will make meaningful and urgent the reconciliation of man with man.

The Christian Basis for Concern

An Abner Dean cartoon shows a little man on a railroad handcar in the middle of a desert with the caption below: "What am I doing here?" This is the question with which we may begin: Why are we here? What is life all about? These questions must be dealt with, as well as their corollaries, What must I do . . . ? How shall I do it? Needless to say, it is not possible to answer these questions with simple propositions. In the first place, these questions must ever be asked anew by sensitive men and women. And the answers must be forged out in the arena of life at great spiritual, and sometimes material, risk. But it is still possible to point to the source of normative Christianity, the Bible, and discern a perspective in these matters.

THE BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE. Bernhard Anderson's *Rediscovering the Bible*² is of great value in communicating this perspective to students. In this book Anderson deals with the significance of the "myths" of creation and the fall and the establishment of an ethically based covenant. From the beginning the concern seems to have been that man accept his creaturehood (his "createdness") and live as a child within God's family, with dominion over all the other creatures but not over the hearts, minds, and bodies of his brothers. Dominion over man is reserved to God alone, and man's sin is his attempt to "play God," as expressed in his refusal to accept his own finitude and in his attempts to dominate or use his fellow men. The fall, of course, is the Bible's "mythical" explanation of how man lost his pristine innocence and be-

² Bernhard Anderson, *Rediscovering the Bible*. New York: Association Press, 1951.

came universally self-centered and "inhuman." The establishment of the covenant with Moses is the showing of the way by which man can once again be established as man. The law is to keep man, as creature, in his intended relationship with God as Creator and Father, and with man as fellow creature and brother.

The Old Testament is essentially the law and the prophets, the rules of God's agreement with man by which man might live at peace with God, himself, and his fellow men (the law). It is the preaching and writing of Israel's ethically sensitive leaders in which the children of Israel were continually *reminded* that they were the "children of the covenant," that they were "man and not God," and in which they were rebuked for their failure to live up to the ethical demands of the covenant relationship.

The New Testament—the New Covenant—is the fulfilment of the Old. Under this "dispensation" man still understands himself as creature, whose reason for being, as Ibsen once put it, is "to follow out, in everything, what the Master's intention was."³ Under the New Covenant man still is to accept his creaturehood in relation to God and to "love his neighbor as himself."

But these intentions are now carried out not in terms of adherence to legal prescriptions, but as an expression of God's love. "We love," said John, "because he first loved us." As Paul put it, Christians live by grace and not by the law. "The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

It is amply clear in the New Testament that we are dealing with the same ethical concerns which are fundamental to the Old. What were the great commandments which Jesus regarded as the sum of the law and the prophets? Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18: "You shall love the Lord your God . . . and your neighbor as yourself." The New Testament repeats the Levitical admonition, in one form or another, at least eight times. "Neighbor love" is basic to the New Testament answer to the question, What am I here for?

A DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH. It should be noted that one of the real faults of the old nineteenth-century Social Gospel and its more sophisticated twentieth-century forms was the absence of an adequate doctrine of the Church. This was perhaps not an urgent matter for the ethicists of the pre-World War Two years, but it is for us. We are at a juncture in history where we can no longer treat the matter of Christian social ethics apart from the totality of Christian faith and practice without running the serious risk of irrelevancy as far as the new generation is concerned. The point at which this comes the clearest is with reference to the Church.

³ From *Eleven Plays of Henrik Ibsen*, p. 1175. New York: Modern Library.

We must be careful in our consideration of the Christian in society not to think simply of isolated, individual Christians. Many theological "liberals" of the older generation tend to think of the Church as an agency for social action, and to speak of it along with "other organizations" as a group that can do something about some particular social problem. Their primary identification, it seems, is not with the Church as such, but with a "liberal organization" or circle of friends. This is inadequate from what appears to be a more biblical view of the Church. As Krister Stendahl of Harvard has pointed out, the New Testament writers had an astonishingly high regard for the Christian fellowship as something of an end in itself. They never regarded it just as a means to an end. It was not merely a Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and certainly it was not a social action agency. The primary "social" identification of the Christian was in divine society—the Church.

This is not to say that the Church, as such, should have no concern for social issues. From a normative, biblical point of view, the Christian is primarily and inseparably a member of divine society, and it is from his nourishment there, in worship, on the word of love and truth that he is enabled to participate with reason, purpose, power, and love in the social order. But it is to say more than this. It is to say that Christian faith and practice, or just "Christian faithfulness," is a totality, an integrated event, not a series of stages described by a system of doctrines. That is, the Christian life does not begin with "a commitment for Christ" at the feet of an evangelist, proceed to church membership, and then issue in service to humanity (evangelism, churchmanship, social action) or something like that.

The Church must not even be regarded, essentially, as an agency which inspires and motivates social action. It is a society of men and women who come together in faithfulness around the word of grace and truth; who are reminded that they are loved infinitely; who are helped in sermon, sacrament, and pastoral care to accept what God already loves (namely, themselves as they really are); and who are nourished and strengthened in their trust in the ultimate significance of righteousness and truth. Such hearing, receiving, and trusting is a total "event of grace" and encompasses all that the Church speaks of as "the decision for Christ," "new birth," "salvation," and "growth in grace."

The Church is fundamentally concerned about reconciliation—making whole again that which has become separated. This assumes, of course, that there is an essential unity which has been broken (man from God, from himself, and from his fellow men). This is the teaching of the doctrine of creation and the fall. These teachings assume further that a new unity (salvation) is possible through grace or love. The Church is set in the world as a living witness to these truths, again not as a propaganda agency, but as a living manifestation of the reality of grace and truth. In this community man must both *hear about* and *ex-*

perience acceptance and love, and join in a corporate dedication to righteousness and truth.

The Church's reason for being, then, is to be a living witness in the world, by both precept and example, to the reconciling power and love of God. In a world of bewilderment, exploitation, and strife the Church must stand as a witness to the ultimate significance of justice and love. In its corporate life the Church must struggle with the implications of such a witness for the specific moral issues of the culture in which it is bound. It means, for example, that the Westminster Fellowship at the University of Georgia must take seriously the problem of enforced segregation and must deal with the issue in terms of the "wholeness" which is the object of God's reconciling purpose in the world. The Church—*the community of acceptance and love*—must dare to "be itself" and help its members accept one another in such confidence that it can deal with serious issues in light of the perspective of biblical thought. "Be no longer children," said Paul, "but speak the truth in love."

Here is where the content of Protestant ethics is forged out, in the honest and serious (not pietistic) grappling with moral issues by the Christian community on the basis of a biblically grounded view of reality. But we must recognize that at the same time we are seeking more light we are also forced to make decisions based on the light which we have. We can never be detached from the human struggle or exonerated from the consequences of our action or supposed inaction. If we live, we participate. As John Donne has said, "No man is an Iland . . . every man is a peece of the Continent. . . ." This adds both urgency to our corporate quest for truth, and a painful sense of the need for grace as we realize that our "glorious contentment" and "unabashed self-centeredness" have painful consequences for our fellow men.

The Meaning of Evangelism

It has often been said by sensitive Christians in this post-World War Two era that there can be no separation of evangelism, worship, and social action. These are simply different aspects of the same thing. Worship is the hearing and heeding of the word, and the word is a message of justice and love (law and gospel), bearing heavily on the reconciliation of man with man (the basis of social action).

Evangelism is witnessing to the Truth—both the "saving truth" of Jesus Christ and "truth" in the sense of simple honesty about "things as they are." These aspects of truth, for the Church, are inseparable. If the Church is to witness to the truth, of course, it must "be the truth" or "do the truth" as well as speak it, though again these are inseparable.

THE DECISION FOR CHRIST. But the Church in its evangelism has always been concerned with conversion and a "decision for Christ." Nineteenth-century revivalism, with which we are still involved (especially in the South), was almost obsessed with a concern to "convict and

convert," forgetting sometimes, I think, its own contention that this was the work of the Holy Spirit. The object and goal of a revival service was, and still is, to win as many "decisions for Christ" as possible. One need not dwell on the faults of revivalism. For most in campus work its shortcomings are obvious. But its concern for a "decision for Christ" as essential to evangelism was proper, even if badly misplaced.

SOCIAL CONCERN. The Christian in society, evangelism, and the decision for Christ are inextricably involved. For it is as we participate in the pain and struggle of our world—where human values are at stake and personal risks are involved—that we decide whether all this stuff about a God of creation, judgment, and grace is real or whether it is nonsense. The degree to which we are able to rationalize or ignore the implications of Christian discipleship in the area of personal and social morality is the extent to which we are really disbelievers, our piety to the contrary notwithstanding.

In our time it is scarcely possible to overemphasize this point. Students have been schooled in "life adjustment" and quietly abhor the thought of standing over against society because of a commitment to anything. But the Christian life is not governed by an ethic of prudence or "the way of adjustment." It is governed by an ethic of the Kingdom, and its way is the way of the cross. Its authority is not the judgment of the peer group, but the Lordship of Christ.

LOSING LIFE—TO FIND IT. In helping students find out who they are, or experience the freedom to which Christ has called us, or discover the wholeness of life, or "do the truth," we must help them take seriously the life-and-death significance of Christian discipleship. And we must ask them to help us do the same, for there can be no wholeness, no freedom, no ability to care, and no power to act without a willingness to die. "For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it."

One of the symptoms of the "beat generation" is an occasional outburst of utter foolishness among those who belong to some of its more cultic expressions. Often these outbursts are stunts involving the risk of death, such as the well-known game of "chicken," deliberate and violent clashes with the law, or passing on a blind hill or curve at high speeds in order to qualify for a teen-age club. As one "beat" put it, his credo was to "live fast, die young, and have a good-looking corpse."

But these are more than symptoms. They are pathetic attempts on the part of these youngsters to find themselves and to find meaning in existence by facing and affirming death. In their desperation, in their rebellion against the pretenses of our own American materialism, they have somehow come to sense what Christianity has always known: life's meaning cannot be found apart from a serious affirmation of its finitude.

We ourselves, personally and in our public ministries, have not been nearly bold enough to affirm that it is in the "risk of death," and of all that finitude implies, that we find ourselves and the freedom to be the sons of God. We are involved in a circle here (not a vicious one). If we are to participate as Christians in a society which is broken and sick, we must be willing on occasion to stand over against it, to run the risk of being "square," and to take on the hostility that will likely be engendered. This requires first a kind of total decision—a leap of faith—in which the ultimate meaningfulness of such discipleship is affirmed. This involves evangelism, the object of which is the making of such decisions.

But no such evangelism and decision-making is possible apart from the witness of the Church, both in its teaching and in its corporate life, to the gospel of reconciliation. And neither a faithful discipleship nor a meaningful corporate witness to the truth is possible without constant nourishment from the Word and strength from a worshiping community. Social action, evangelism, and worship are inseparable, and this fact ought to be reflected in campus Christian fellowships.

Practical Implications

Having dealt with the problem of unconcern among contemporary students and the basis and place of social concern within the life of the Church, much still must be said about some of the practical "facts of life."

How do students function practically in society as agents of reconciliation? Much of the bewilderment, apathy, and cynicism of students is perfectly understandable, once an attempt has been made to deal with a specific special problem. Very few, if any, social issues are clear-cut, and some of the more pressing ones, such as the control of atomic testing, are actually obscured by the secrecy of relevant information. And even when some measure of moral clarity on an issue emerges, action is almost hopelessly frustrated by the pressure and power of vested interests. At this point a rationale for political action is needed—and needed badly.⁴

THE FUNCTION OF POWER IN SOCIETY. If we are going to deal with the social order at all we must prepare ourselves to deal with power. This is nothing really new to anyone. Every social structure is a power structure, including the family and the campus Westminster Fellowship! One notion that many pious students must get over is that there is something wrong with power as such. In our popular piety, for example, it is always the "bad guys" who resort to power politics.

⁴ See Reinhold Niebuhr, *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics*; John Bennett, *Christian Ethics and Social Policy*; William Muehl, *Politics for Christians*; Waldo Beach, *Conscience on Campus*.

But there is also the danger that other students will regard political power too highly and act as though a more pious governor or president would, by virtue of his piety and power, be able to "make things better." Witness Frank Buchman's attempt to convert Hitler to Christianity back in the nineteen thirties. This kind of thinking is sometimes grotesquely present in campus evangelism and campus politics too.

The issue of the world's hunger and American food surpluses illustrates the complexity of the problem raised by social and particularly economic structures. It would seem a simple solution for our government to give away these surpluses to the hungry nations. Yet to do so would wreck their economies and cause more hardship than good. This is an example of the demonic element present in power structures which just does not yield to good will or Christian piety.

Students need to learn to take power seriously, to seek it when proper and necessary, to receive it when won or bestowed, and to use it with propriety and restraint. Protestant piety tends to engender a kind of "that's not nice" attitude toward the open seeking of power, to regard it as self-aggrandizement and to remind us that love "seeketh not her own." Of course, a misbegotten lust for power can come under this judgment. But power need not be sought in this way. The result of this is that many students, unable to affirm the quest for power in an open and creative manner, forget or suppress their piety when the time comes and get swept along by the sheer lust to become president of the student council or secretary of the senior class, without the foggiest intention of using this power for anything but the prestige of holding it.

Most student groups need to give considerably more thought to the participation of their members in campus politics. This would mean taking seriously the power structure of the campus and a realistic grappling with the problem of political compromise. It would mean taking a careful and honest look at the really serious social issues which exist in the university community. These might include the treatment of minority groups, the problem of organized student cheating, and the need for an atmosphere of *positive* academic freedom where controversy can be engaged with impunity and new ideas can emerge. It might mean that some of these students would seek the Greek or independent nomination for some office. Or it might mean starting a new party, building a political organization, drafting a responsible platform, selecting candidates, raising money, and conducting a campaign. Probably nothing else students could do would help them understand better the reality of political power and the effective means with which to cope with it.

If students are ever going to do anything serious about relating their social concerns, as Christians, to the realm of politics, this is the time to do it—while they are still on campus. Furthermore, success in campus politics, especially on state university campuses, very often leads to successful participation in local, state, and national politics in later years.

Why be concerned about power? Because society is by definition a social order, and this order is maintained and changed by the use of power. The concern of the Christian in society fundamentally should be for a *just* social order, a social order in which the greatest degree of opportunity and freedom is possible for all men.

We need to stress, too, that a concern for the social order is not an "elective" for Christians. This concern is rooted in the very gospel of reconciliation itself which holds that it is preposterous to express concern for a man's soul without showing concern for his worldly needs.⁵ If we are to take this seriously in the twentieth century we must take politics seriously, because the state is inextricably involved with the meeting of these needs. Attention is called especially at this point to Richard Shaull's succinct remarks concerning "The Advent of the Great Society" in his book *Encounter with Revolution*. In our modern industrial society the state is, and will continue to be, a "welfare state," and Christians in America cannot responsibly express a concern for their brothers in need, whether these brothers live in the slums of Athens, Georgia, or a refugee camp in Palestine, without dealing with the structures of power which bear upon the treatment these men and women receive.

THE PROBLEM OF LOVE AND JUSTICE. Some Christian ethicists contend that the object of Christian concern in society is "social justice." They do not always mean simple, retributive (an eye for an eye) and distributive justice, in a circumscribed, legal sense. Paul Ramsey in his *Basic Christian Ethics* infuses the notion of "social justice" with what he calls a biblical sense of "redemptive justice," which is always "biased in favor of" the poor, the sojourner, the disinherited, and the downtrodden. Redemptive justice is based more on a response to basic human need than on cold, dispassionate adherence to abstract legal principles.

Even at that, some Christians object that the concern of the Christian in society is not justice but love. The performance of justice is seen as a kind of minimal Christian activity. "The *least* you can do is give a man justice." If we really want to be Christian, it is presumed, we will give a man "love." It is further objected that Christians ought to try to influence the particular society in which they are involved in such a way that it will respond "in love" to other social and ethnic groups. For instance, the position of some pacifists is that America should "love her enemies"—put down her arms and take what comes.⁶

There remains a problem, however, of viewing justice as something less than love on the scale of Christian values. Niebuhr and Brunner

⁵ See James 2:15-16 and I John 3:10-18.

⁶ If any students are bothered by this last objection, I would suggest their reading the article entitled "Why the Church Is Non-Pacifist" in Reinhold Niebuhr's *Christianity and Power Politics*, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940.

give considerable thought to this problem, but Paul Tillich in his *Love, Power, and Justice* probably gives it the most satisfactory treatment. He sees love as the drive for the unity of the separated, and justice as the condition or form in which reunion takes place. This holds true in all the areas in which reconciliation is needed (man with God, with himself, and with his fellow man).

Love and justice are not antithetical, nor is one superior to the other. They are different but interrelated aspects of the same reality. Love is the drive for reconciliation of the separated, and justice is the condition on which such reconciliation takes place.

In terms of practical campus social relations this would mean that we relate to one another, individually and corporately, on the basis of a high sense of justice. That is to say, for example, that we take with utter seriousness the "personhood" of other individuals, that we treat them as *persons* and not as *objects* of contempt, of sentimental emotion, or of indifference. To "do unto others as you would have others do to you" is a form of justice. Love is the drive of persons to be reconciled on such a basis. Such a view of the interrelatedness of justice and love has bearing on all personal and social relationships in college and beyond—the relations between man and woman, between members of different racial groups, between Greeks and independents, between Americans and Russians, between the state and its citizens, between parent and child.

What about punishment? Can an individual or group be punished in love? Not if love is mere pious sentiment. If love is the expression of concern for the well-being of a person or group, it can certainly discipline. It is conceivable, at any rate, that the dean of men can shut down a fraternity house for a quarter because of repeated, uncontrolled drinking bouts, as an act of "love" for the fraternity. And certainly every mother who reads *Parents' Magazine* and *The Ladies' Home Journal* knows that the understanding and consistently just disciplining of a child is absolutely essential to his emotional health. Again, justice and love are not antithetical, but justice is the form in which honest love is expressed.

CHRISTIANITY AND POLITICS. In professional politics Christians are often "babes in the woods." Some students are heirs of a long tradition of puritanism. The leaders in our campus fellowships may be students who will have some strain of the old puritan absolutism in them, at least with regard to the compromise of one's conscience. If one believes that smoking, drinking, and swearing are "bad," then he is not likely to find very many political gatherings congenial to his moral scruples. And what is more serious, if he has any intention of moving eventually into a position of strength within a party—as an officer, a candidate for public office, or the recipient of an appointive office—and is a man of "high ideals," he is almost sure to run into an initial disillusionment when he

finds that he must compromise some of his principles in order to succeed.

Someone has defined politics as "the art of the possible." Students are notoriously ill-prepared to face this fact of life and deal responsibly, as Christians, with politics on this basis. We are greatly in need of finding ways to involve students in the realities of political life, in actually working with a party—getting petitions signed, ringing doorbells, and electioneering. Certainly participation in campus politics is of great importance here. But it is not enough. There is a need also for some experience with the blunt realities of "courthouse" politics all the way up and down the line.

As Protestants most of us have a sense of guilt to confess and a feeling of real bewilderment to share. How can we do all that we are supposed to do and really do anything serious about politics? Perhaps at least by confessing our impotence in these matters and in sharing our uneasiness we may be led to see some new light on our problem.

Reconciliation: The Object of Social Concern

Through all this our concern is to be God's children, to love one another and *to care about the well-being of our brothers.*

Suppose some brother or sister is ill-clad and short of daily food; if any of you tells them, "Depart in peace! Get warm, get food," without supplying their bodily needs, what use is that?⁷

The gospel is really very simple: We are loved and we are to be loving. This is not sentimentality. It is profound and its implications are concrete. In the biblical view of reality, to be human is to be a child of God. And this means being a member of the family on his terms—to love one another and to minister to each others' needs.

No one is exempt from God's love, whether he is consciously a part of his family (the Church), whether he is a Marxian atheist or Indian Buddhist or American cynic. And no one is exempt from the concern of the Church in its work of bearing God's grace, which means concern for *all* the needs of man. But again, this is not a matter of pious sentiment. To be God's children in this mid-twentieth century, to live out the kind of reconciliation the Apostle James speaks about above, to do something about the needs of our brothers—this means taking seriously the structure and power of modern society, which is the way in which such needs are met in our time.

Our concerns for social problems root in the very gospel itself—in the fact that God cares about his children, that he wants them to live together in peace and to love one another in fact and in deed. This is the gospel of reconciliation. We must take seriously the structures of power in our society and the necessity to deal with power and use it

⁷ James 2:15-16, from *The Bible: A New Translation* by James Moffatt. Copyright 1922, 1935, and 1950 by Harper & Brothers. Used by permission.

for the well-being of our brothers. But we cannot simply fight for social justice in the sense that we disregard human feelings, pit the "good guys" against the "bad," and carelessly alienate men from one another.

We must work always for the *breaking down* of the walls of separation, for the reconciling of man with man, and for the manifesting of God's Kingdom in this world.

Here is how the children of God . . . are recognized; anyone who does not practise righteousness does not belong to God, and neither does he who has no love for his brother. For this is the message you have learned from the very beginning, that we are to love one another . . .

We know what love is by this, that He laid down his life for us; so we ought to lay down our lives for the brotherhood. But whoever possesses this world's goods, and notices his brother in need, and shuts his heart against him, how can love to God remain in him?

Dear children, let us put our love not into words or into talk but into deeds, and make it real.⁸

⁸ I John 3:10-18 (Moffatt).

communicating the Christian faith¹

XII

Evangelism: What It Is and What It Is Not

"Communicating the Christian faith" is a more acceptable phrase to our ears than the traditional word "evangelism" and the meaning which lies behind it. But it is with evangelism, or with a redefinition of it, that we have to do in this chapter. Indeed, by using the words "communicating the Christian faith" we are already attempting, in part, a redefinition of evangelism, one of the most misunderstood words in our Christian vocabulary. Although recent years have brought a recovery in Christian thought and language, such words as "witness," "proclamation," "testimony," are still generally misunderstood. "Evangelism" still seems to suggest for many a particularly zealous kind of religious activity aimed at compelling personal decisions on specific occasions and increasing membership rolls. In such a conception evangelism has been perverted into a self-centered technique, directed at drawing others to *us* (in the name of the Church, of course) when it is precisely intended to express the outgoing concern of the Church.

The word "communication" may help in restoring a needed perspective in evangelism, for a genuine concern for communication implies a respect for the other person involved in the relationship. At the same time it acknowledges that a person has the right, which cannot be avoided, to communicate *something*—ideas or prejudices, convictions or lack of them—to others around him. Rightly conceived, evangelism is involved in the total relationship between the Church and the world. It is not one of the activities or one of the specialized functions of the Church; rather it takes place in it through total life within the world.

But, as the Life and Mission emphasis of the World's Student Christian Federation so sharply points out, evangelism—the communicating of the saving truth and love of God in Jesus Christ—is done for the sake of the world and not for the sake of the Church. It arises from the outward-looking, extroverted character of the gospel which takes the world seriously, "for God so loved the *world*." As Philippe Maury wrote in a recent issue of *The Student World*, "We know that Jesus Christ is hope, our hope, the hope of the Church, and the hope of the world. But I am

¹ The last half of this chapter is adapted from the article "A Theology for Evangelism in the University" by William N. Lovell, *The Pulpit*, November, 1957.

not so sure that we have really worked out this theological conviction in terms of our concrete attitude towards the world and our missionary responsibilities within it. Even though we affirm that Jesus Christ is the hope of the world, we behave as if there were hope only for some sort of residual world, for an empty shell from which everything 'worldly' has been carefully thrown out."² We behave as if the world were an arena of activity—not *within* which there is to be found hope and salvation, but *out of* which people are to be plucked for the life of the Church.

All this has implications for us who find ourselves in college and university situations, as well as for Christian communities in any locale. To what extent do our campus Christian communities live within a little world of their own? To what extent do they focus their attention outwardly upon the world in which they are placed and to which they should be related?

Having said that evangelism describes an essential outgoing relationship between the gospel and the world, we need to look further at how in our Christian thinking we misunderstand the relationship between them. These are questions for serious study prior to any effective communication of the Christian faith.

CHURCH AND WORLD. Most American Christians lack the sense of discontinuity between the Church and the world which is necessary if a significant relationship between them is to be conceived. We have grown up in churches just as naturally as we have grown up in our families, schools, and communities. Being Christian is something we have absorbed as we drank our mother's milk, and church activity takes its place alongside other worthy activities in our society. In order to perceive a relationship between the Church and the world which carries any tension with it and calls for any evangelism, we have first to be spoken to by God in a way that makes us respond self-consciously as Christians called out and set apart from the world, for the world. This new self-identity as a "people who were once no people" is, at the same time, an awareness of an "over-againstness" in relation to the world, an "over-againstness" which sees that the world needs saving from the principalities and powers which enthrall it.

There can be no profound evangelism either in the university or in society at large unless it arises out of the restless knowledge on the part of the Christian community that it is in the world but not of it, and that the world is estranged from the purposes of God. Do students bring from their home churches such a self-consciousness? The accommodation of our churches to their surrounding culture is demonstrated in that so-called secular art and literature reveals a more sensitive expression of the spiritual dislocation of our times than religious circles, and also in that

² From the article "Christianity and Secular Ideologies," *The Student World*, No. 2, 1958, p. 130.

the lead in matters of racial and social injustice comes often from non-religious quarters.

Even though it is important that there be tensions and conflict between the Church and the world, between the Christian community and the campus in which it is placed, it is just as important that there be no withdrawal of the Church from the world. This is so whether it is a conscious and self-righteous withdrawal or an unconscious and self-protective one. For the gulf between the gospel and society is as fully within us as persons as it is between us and the world. The working out of God's purposes will take place within the secular world fully as much as in and through Christian institutions. God is "out there" in Christ transforming, re-creating, and preserving the world, bringing it into conformity with what it was intended to be in God's plan. All this means that the Church, whether conceived of as the continuing ministry of Christ on earth or as God's chosen people, as the bearer of the Kingdom of God or as the community having an ultimate reference, cannot be thought of as the sole locus of God's activity. God is at work in the world as well as in the Church, even though the Church may be thought of as existing in a latent and unacknowledged form throughout the world. And the world is in the churches, giving Christians continuing reason for struggle and witness and repentance within.

Communicating the Christian faith, whether on campus or in the Congo, does not mean the imposing of a strange and unrecognizable thing upon a benighted and pagan people. It is rather the interpretation of what God in Christ is already doing in the affairs of the world, in the ideologies of men, in other religions, in communism, humanism, scientism, art, or politics. Much of the time, as has been observed, he is working more tellingly through these instruments than through his Church! To be sure, judgment, decision, and repentance are necessary in the world as they are among those who count themselves within the Church. But the fruit of communicating the gospel is the making manifest of "God among us," past, present, and future, and the acknowledgment of his truth and grace in Jesus Christ throughout the created order.

NEW DIMENSIONS IN PERSONAL EVANGELISM. Still another misunderstanding that seriously distorts our idea of evangelism is our conception of the relationship between the individual person and the corporate group. Nowhere can this misunderstanding be more clearly seen than in the academic situation where students and faculty are conscious of their individuality and yet are involved in virile group life. Evangelism is often taken to mean an activity directed at individuals, somehow abstracted from the context of their various associations. Our church campaigns sometimes stress the point by calling it "personal evangelism," and this, it is implied, is the real thing. According to this view, not only are we meant to deal with people personally,

as isolated units, so to speak, but evangelism is to be carried out by individual members of the church, one by one.

Certainly at some point the Christian decision must become personal, but American and Protestant individualism frequently delimits and confines the scope of evangelism to the individual alone. Not only does this imply the distorted view that a person lives in a vacuum, but it also rests upon a distorted view of the Church as if it were a collection of individual Christians.

It is certainly true today that persons are largely determined by the structures around them, by the "bodies" of which they are a part. We feel that we know a significant thing about a person when we learn that he is a chemist, an artist, or a politician; that he is a student at Antioch or Macalester; that he is a Jew, a Negro, a fraternity man, or an independent. We speak of the "organization man" in this "other-directed" society. Collective pressures on the campus indicate clearly that persons do not exist apart from the categories and groupings to which they belong. Perhaps this attachment represents something less than real commitment, but it has been observed that in our time modern man "has no longer any stamina for personal decision, a faculty in man to which the existing evangelism automatically appeals."³

From the discussion thus far, it can be seen that meaningful evangelism will address itself to men *in the context* of their bodies or structures which shape and influence them. It will find imaginative ways of operating within the structures themselves, whether they be institutions, minority groups, thought-forms, political and economic patterns, or professions.

Furthermore, the instrument of communication must be the Church and not just Christian individuals. This is true first of all because the Church, as the community of God's people, is part of the evangel itself. Evangelism should enlist and reflect the corporate concern of the Christian community, or the Church can be judged as possessing no self-conscious mission to the world.

We shall turn now to see if these general affirmations with regard to evangelism are helpful to us as we undertake a more detailed analysis of our college and university situations.

The Scope of Christian Concern in the University

Christians should be sensitive to the total life of the university, to all the elements in it which make of it the microcosm of society that it is. This is not to say that the Christian community will fritter away its time and energies in countless small acts of righteousness, but rather it describes the essential perspective with which it views the university.

³ Credited to Dr. H. Hoekendyk by Hendrik Kraemer in *The Communication of the Christian Faith*, p. 111. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956.

Something of the Christian faith will be communicated, if faculty and students demonstrate that all aspects of the university's life are of significance. That is to say that the university as well as all God's creation is to be taken seriously, that it is filled with meaning and can be an object of hope. It would also mean that the university exists in its own integrity as one of the instruments of God's purposes. Cultural institutions, as well as persons, can become dehumanized if they become insensitive to the wholeness of the potential that is within them. Christian students and faculty can be evangelists as they guard and defend the university's essential intellectual tasks in an era when they are most threatened. In so doing they will be declaring the true spirit of Christian humanism which sees the grace and truth of God in Jesus Christ as the ground of culture as well as of all creation, including the university with its religious pluralism and its secular freedom.

This outlook forbids anything like an adolescent trumpeting of preachments. A sober perspective of this sort can play its corrective and creative part in the life of an institution. One of the things it will say is that institutions of higher education are not something to be used like cafeterias, but are rather communities of learning in which we ought fully to participate. This view might be a significant factor in many schools, especially junior colleges and the trade schools of our cities!

THE VOCATION OF THE STUDENT. This attitude also has implications for the self-understanding of students and faculty. The Christian student should understand that his vocation is first of all to be a *student*. In so doing he may be an evangelist for the claim laid on him by Christ to give his life in responsible service to God and humanity. This is more easily said than done, for certainly Christian students, no less than others, have been infected by the genial activism on the outside and lack of commitment on the inside that seem to characterize the student generation of today.

The Christian student will be communicating to others something further about his faith if he takes his vocation seriously. And taking it seriously means that he has made a commitment of himself to a degree that is lacking among many students. The commitment will look in two directions. First it will look to the future in a responsible, disciplined training and integration of capacities for future service, an attitude which actually calls for a certain suspense and withholding from conclusions in many matters. At the same time, the vocation of a serious student will lead him to recognize that this is a period of real life, not just a happy transition period devoid of its own significance. It has its own eternity about it. Its decisions have present meaning and future consequences; its relationships are continuing. Each student must determine his own balance between these perspectives, but they are both part

of taking studentship as a vocation seriously. If they reflect a motivation in Christian faith, this will be communicated.

Evangelism will take place also if the Christian student is seen to study his own faith with the same diligence he applies to his other studies. If his Christianity merits only the part-time respect of good fellowship and popular speakers, that is all that will be communicated.

THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS. Two significant points which must be faced by both evangelism and the educational process are the wholeness of truth and the wholeness of persons. The committed Christian student, in his own study and in discussions with others, should ask questions and take positions that reflect his Christian insights. The wholeness of truth will mean not only the interrelationship of all truth, but also the holy significance of truth inasmuch as the emphasis for the Christian does not ultimately lead to truth for truth's sake, but truth for goodness' sake. This does not mean what religious history has sometimes perverted it to mean—namely, that goodness (whose goodness?) comes prior to and determines truth—but rather that the highest goodness *will be served by truth*.

Such a view raises two or three questions with which the Christian student should be familiar when he insists upon the wholeness of truth and the wholeness of persons. Such a position includes a frank recognition of commitment and the espousal of values in the educational process. But the Christian student will ask for such commitment, not in repudiation of objectivity, but for the sake of objectivity. In battling the valueless objectivity that has been an academic cult, the Christian student and faculty person will still battle for objectivity, but an objectivity that is possible because of the enlightening, liberating power of the commitment that underlies it.

In addition, there are a number of delicate balances which must be weighed between integration and specialization in knowledge and the degree to which specific Christian insights can inform particular fields of study. Wholeness of truth and of persons does not mean integration at the expense of specialization, which would be the dilettante's non-intellectual solution. Rather it means the wholeness that is to be found in and through a depth understanding of one's chosen field and an equally profound understanding of other fields. Seeking such depth, rather than superficial connections, will be a test of the measure with which we take God's creation seriously! Any easy relation between Christian faith and particular fields of study, though such relating is an essential enterprise of the Christian community, can do disrespect to those fields if done carelessly.

Christians in the university should be sensitive to these intellectual questions as well as to a host of matters such as the balance between

teaching and research, the development of curriculum, the relationship between faculty, administration, trustees, and so forth.

PROBLEMS OF CAMPUS LIFE. A more tangible area of concern is the complex of university life. This means student government, fraternities and sororities, the campus newspaper, student-faculty-administration relations, housing patterns, issues of academic freedom, the place of racial and minority groups, commuting students, as well as the total intellectual and social climate of the campus. Here is the place where actions speak louder than words, for the usual pattern of our campus groups is that they are pleasant fellowships, meeting in a corner, neither informed, concerned, nor emboldened to take effective action. To the extent that this is true, their witness is to a quiescent and napping God, not to One who is by his own initiative involved in the great questions in the field of higher education. If significant action is to be undertaken, action which will be truly evangelical, several factors must be borne in mind. Participation in the academic community should reflect continuing awareness of those significant areas where the university's own life is most threatened. It should grow out of a genuine concern, and not for a self-advertising righteousness. It should be accompanied by diligent searching and study and an openness to the leading of the Spirit that will bring freshness to the learning situation.

Evangelism will be effective in any community to the extent that it is sensitive to the problems of the community. These problems may often be inconspicuous, neglected, or unexpected ones. They will concern the "Wilberforce corner" of isolated Negroes, the minority of Jews, the denial of academic freedom to a single teacher, the "rah-rah" tone of the campus, the insensitivity of campus politics, the lack of real encounter between overseas and American students. Each campus has its own set of problems, and each Christian group must, in its own way, be aware of them.

CONCERN FOR PERSONS. Responsible Christian students and faculty will be aware of the problems of personal living in the campus community. Warning has been given against abstracting persons from the fabric of their environmental structures. But it would be equally serious to deal with students or faculty as if they were but units in some larger reality.

The labels by which members of the university are willing to live are often protective devices to cover personal and inarticulate searching for something not yet found. It has been said that this student generation shies away from commitments that are too inclusive because "it acts like a man who has been hurt, and wants not to be hurt more." It is often only in an individual, personal relationship that such "hurt" can be honestly and sensitively uncovered. The first effective step in communi-

cating Christian faith may come through the therapy of an accepting and open personal relationship. Such relationships, requiring time, intelligence, and the complete disavowal of promotional intentions, should be of the essence of the Christian community's contacts with those about it. Indeed this is not only the way of evangelism, it is the way of life by which Christians upbuild and sustain one another.

Such is the limitless scope of the Christian concern for the university, the field in which we must communicate the Christian faith. It is a full-time job and more. For this reason it is important that the student remember that his chief vocation is to be a Christian *student*, and this includes discovering the lasting "calling" by which he can communicate such total concern through one limited life.

Guiding Principles in Attitude and Action

Thus far a number of guiding principles have emerged, several of which should be examined more fully. They are by no means exhaustive, nor perhaps even the chief assumptions guiding our campus evangelism, but they are offered as significant clues to the university situation today.

IDENTIFICATION. One of the qualifying principles is that the Christian community finds itself identified with those to whom it would commend the gospel. Before we can hope to communicate with others, before any evangelism can achieve its goal, it must start with the recognition of participation and involvement in the same anxieties and needs, the same doubts and unanswerable questions, the same sin and frustration as beset all humanity. One of the reasons that the world pays so little attention to the churches (even though much of the world seems to be in the churches) is that it believes that the churches do not really know the problems. It is assumed that religion knows only a nice world, not the real one, and so it is out of communication with the real world in spite of the so-called religious revival.

The student Christian community will need to face honestly the question of what answers it has to give, and then participate in the real life of all to whom it would be related. Do we in any measure identify ourselves with the minority groups on campus? Do we acknowledge our own unbelief and yearning for answers we do not possess? Do we take part in the intellectual life of the university? Do we take with us our Christian self-consciousness as we so participate? What is called for is a measure of participation in the situation that others may know that we recognize and share the same world with them. Only then will the answers to which we point claim attention.

PROCLAMATION. A second principle follows, namely that effective evangelism in the university will come from an attitude that combines affirmative boldness with a disavowal of pat and absolute answers.

If the temper of the student mind is actually one that yearns for answers yet suspects the phony and the presumptuous, then this is the attitude that is called for. Not only is it called for by the times, but it is deeply rooted in the scriptures where trust is closely associated with despair, where the assurance of God's love is radically tempered by the knowledge of his hiddenness, where faith is affirmed not as a philosophic universal but as a testimony of personal experience.

Even though "inner-directed" living may be at a premium, the present mood nonetheless acknowledges that every person lives by a particular affirmation of his own being, wherever he is; and one is respected for a positive, though limited, "here stand I." To this extent, objectivity at all costs has given way to the honest declaration of one's presuppositions, reasonably held, and the university has become the ground for competing ideologies, department by department, profession by profession. It might be worth observing that such "confessional" positions, if such they may be called, which do not presume to know the absolute but stand in the affirmation of a particular truth, accord well with the existentialist spirit that affirms one's individual freedom without venturing to enunciate universals or ultimates. At this level, then, our evangelism is nothing more or less than engaging in the process in which all living beings are properly engaged—the offering to others of the personal truth that has been "revealed" to oneself.

TRANSLATION. Though the gospel is one and the same message with a proclamation at its heart, it must be translated into many tongues. As Philippe Maury has written, "There is no question, of course, of learning about the world in order to discover what our message should be: the content of our message depends on God and his revelation alone. Our task is rather to find the language in which that message can be conveyed."⁴ Because the gospel has been isolated from so many of the forms of our culture and society, evangelism in the university must be involved especially in relating the Christian faith to the various disciplines. Christian faith is communicated when students in law and political science, medicine and social service, physics and art, see the relevance of it to their fields. For if the Lordship of Christ has no meaning in these realms which determine the perspective with which one works and thinks, then it has little meaning at all. A kind of personal piety enables people to worship and hold to their faith without relating it to every aspect of their life and culture, including their own vocation, but eventually this confinement of faith suffocates and exhausts it of any living content. Furthermore, since frequently the student temper is suspicious of any direct personal bid for decision, an approach around the circumference is the more effective. Our evangelism in the university

⁴ *The Student World*, No. 2, 1958, p. 131.

makes headway in these directions, and we may trust that God will in his own time bring about personal confrontation with his saving grace in Christ.

OPENNESS. Our trust in God provides the basis for another guiding principle: that the Christian community not press for a tangible commitment as *the only* result of evangelism. There will be persons for whom an invitation to participate in a group or project, to worship in church, or to read certain books will be appropriate at the right moment, as well as the invitation to take Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. But we must remember that immediate results are not always forthcoming, particularly when the Word has to be heard in a fresh way in a culture like ours that is so used to old formulations of it. The editor of a widely read secular journal writes with obvious discouragement and yearning, "We in the West are accustomed, every hour on the hour, to hearing exaltations of the human spirit, of freedom, God, and Christ."⁵ He can hardly be expected to answer an altar call! But he *is* looking for new clues to the meaning of even these accustomed affirmations.

Toward a Meaningful Evangelism

In any consideration of the evangelistic task the inner life as well as the total program of the Christian community will be inescapably involved. That is to say that programing must be done resourcefully if it is to communicate something new and significant, that the outward actions of the community must be responsible and incisive rather than pleasantly conforming, and that the lives of individual persons must be touched directly and at their inner depths. But still more important than these considerations is that the corporate life of the Christian community must have a vitality which reflects its sense of having been made a "people of God." This will mean that study and worship find themselves naturally and genuinely at the base of this community. It will mean that the very structure of the community will reflect a living Person and not simply an organizational pattern. The community must have these characteristics in order to orient the thinking and living of its individual members when they are dispersed, for in dispersion they must still regard themselves as "the church." It may be that student Christian communities of this sort, by God's grace, will provide the resources of courage and motivation that can bring a new vigor into the spiritual listlessness of our time.

This assumption has implications for all who are now in student Christian communities. We know how unprepared we are for such responsibilities. We must look honestly at our corporate Christian life to see in what it actually consists. As Hendrik Kraemer has pointed

⁵ Max Ascoli in *The Reporter*, July 10, 1958, p. 8.

out, "The main issue, the royal road in an overcoming of the breakdown of the communication of the Christian message, is the radical revival of the church, which by definition includes evangelism and apostolate."⁶

THE DEFINING PLACE OF CHRIST. It is Jesus Christ who gives the gospel its distinctive character and transmits its saving power. Communication of the Christian faith does not rest with communicating a set of ideas, values, or principles, but is finally the communication of a Person and what is represented through that Person.

The implication that follows from the last half of the previous sentence is important. One of the heretical temptations to which Christian people all too commonly succumb is that they fall into a kind of "Christ mysticism" which replaces the living God with Jesus of Nazareth. As Professor Joseph Haroutunian has said, "In our present emphasis upon the 'kingship of Christ' and enthusiasm for 'the body of Christ' we do have to be careful not to slip and forget that Jesus is the Christ of God; and that, as Jonathan put it, 'our business is with God.'"⁷ Indeed, the question of our understanding of Christ, who he is, what he means, how he is related to God's total creation as well as to God's redemption, and how he is related to other revelations of God's nature and love—these questions are crucial in communicating the gospel. They demand our careful study and clear understanding if we are to be effective evangelists.

THE COMMUNICATION OF FAITH. To return to an earlier point, what has to be communicated finally is *faith*, the acceptance of God's acceptance of each of us, a personal assurance that is supremely communicated in and through Jesus Christ. This is, ultimately, not a propositional or rational assertion; rather it is an experience that touches the core of our being. Such faith may be brought about by things that appear foolish, low, and despised in the world; by simplicity rather than sophistication; by purity of heart rather than subtlety of mind. "I was with you in weakness and in much fear and trembling," Paul wrote the Corinthians, "and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God."

The tragic foolishness of the death of the Korean student, In Ho Oh, murdered senselessly one evening by a gang of delinquents in Philadelphia, and the utter simplicity of the Christian love expressed by his parents back in Korea will probably do more to communicate Christian

⁶ Hendrik Kraemer, "The Problem of Communication," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, March, 1956.

⁷ Joseph Haroutunian, mimeographed copy of speech to the New England Student Christian Movement, spring 1957.

faith than all the church membership campaigns and all the preaching carried on in Philadelphia in a year. "Truly, I say unto you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

We have been indicating the relationship of the defining place of the person of Christ at the heart of the gospel, the inward and experiential nature of faith in the living God, the final simplicity of such faith and the way it is communicated—these are of crucial importance in effective evangelism.

AN INTELLECTUAL GRASP OF THE GOSPEL. Nevertheless, and at the risk of seeming to qualify these assertions, there is still a responsibility for educated and articulate persons to take the traditional doctrines seriously as they seek to interpret Christian faith. Doctrines are ideas, and ideas are real life. In the university or college community they are, or should be, the coin of the realm. We have tragically neglected what W. A. Visser't Hooft of the World Council of Churches has called the "intellectual gospel" so that much of our culture does not know what it means to think with Christian thoughts. Rather it has been concluded that Christians merely feel with nice sentiments. Communication with those segments of culture which live with and upon ideas has broken down. We have the task, therefore, of entering intelligently into the thought-movements of our secular culture. We also have the responsibility of redeeming our Christian words and doctrines so that they will speak with freshness to these present times. Where else but in our colleges and universities can this exchange and encounter take place?

APOLOGETICS. Much has been said previously in this book on various facets of Christian thought and doctrine. It will be sufficient here simply to suggest some of the ways in which Christian theology can fulfil its apologetic role by speaking with relevance to our culture. We begin with the assumption that the redemption of doctrines presupposes a meaning in these traditional doctrines, the power of which can be recaptured if the meaning is reinterpreted in the current idiom.

We must acknowledge the basic importance of symbol and myth in the understanding of our Christian faith and recognize that there is in the university a new recognition of the importance of myth or symbol in current literature, mass media, the arts, and in their own way, the sciences as well. Evangelism that does not make use of symbol and myth in art forms and in thought forms will be neglecting a chief form of expression.

It is important that Christian doctrines be checked, confirmed, and brought under the authority of biblical revelation. This is a difficult thing to say without inviting literalism or biblical dogmatism. For the Christian community, however, the scriptures of the Old and New Testa-

ment are in a continuing way the norm, the touchstone, the word of God which validates all other words. This will involve us in the question of de-mythologizing or de-literalizing (to use Tillich's attempted improvement on Bultmann's phrase) the essential biblical revelation. The reality of historical criticism and the pervasiveness of the existential outlook in the university make this an unavoidable task for Christians involved in higher education. Failing to involve ourselves in this question, we must content ourselves with casting the gospel, like a Barthian stone, at the university. A profound involvement in the de-mythologizing issue is necessary for those who would undertake to explore the relation between the Church and culture.

Christian affirmations will be understood today if we acknowledge in them the same polarities of coherence and ambiguity, of clarity and mystery, of unity and simplicity, of discontinuity and depth, that seem to describe the human situation as we know it. These are the polarities and paradoxes which characterize sensitive expressions in contemporary drama and art as well as the thought and language of the Bible.

How can some of the basic doctrines of Christian faith be restated so as to speak to the mood of thoughtful students and faculty today? Such central concepts in Christian faith as "God," "Jesus Christ," "salvation," and "Church" are crucial for evangelism, but they are not understood by many. However, there has been cogent rethinking of doctrine so that an opening can be found in communicating their meaning to those outside the Christian community.

It makes sense to the questioning student if the God whom we proclaim is seen to be not the domesticated God of Sunday school experience, shrunk in size by our familiarity with him, a God created in our own image and according to our own conceptions, but is rather the "God above God," to use Tillich's phrase, the ultimate ground of meaning and being. Our God has been too small, and before he can again be heard in personal accents, he needs again to be known in utter transcendence and in ontological reality. As one writer in *The Nation* reported, students have discovered, not from theology, but from the arts that "metaphysics can be a meaningful enterprise."⁸ Our proclamation that "God first loved us" needs to be seen as an affirmation of cosmic acceptance by that which is ultimate in the universe. Having catapulted our understanding of God to reaches beyond the pretense and blasphemy of easy conceptions, it is then possible to affirm confessionally that this God becomes personal for us, that we can come to know him and enter into relationship with him.

Biblical faith can come to life because the Bible declares that the God whose face is always hidden, even to the man of faith, has revealed himself to us. The modern rejection of a God whom we can know too easily

⁸ From "The Careful Young Men," *The Nation*, March 9, 1957.

is itself some indication that the heathen in our midst have deeper faith than many professing Christians.

In like manner the traditional doctrines and affirmations of the Christian faith can make sense when they are seen in the context of ontological or of psychological meaning as well as in the particularity of a personal, confessional, and symbolic expression. When it comes to grasping the significance of Jesus Christ, the modern intellectual who knows estrangement is in a better position than the person who knows no anxieties. For Christ is the bridge between the ultimate and unknowable and our created human existence. He is the One who defines, symbolizes, and transmits the saving love of God to finite and sinful creatures. In this sense the student is more likely to apprehend the meaning of salvation when it is seen in terms of acceptance and restoration than in terms of the moralism and other-worldliness in which it has often been portrayed.

CENTRALITY OF THE CHURCH. There is also made possible for us a renewed understanding of the central place of the Church. The student has seen the Church only through the churches, and in them he fails to be struck by any eternal significance. Yet there is an openness to communication when the Church can be regarded with the same limited acceptance which a student accords to other historical and social institutions, while at the same time he apprehends its basic vocation to represent that community which is founded upon ultimate meaning. The Church must have a concern beyond any local or historical manifestation and must point to the Kingdom of God; only thus can it make sense. It can be strongly appealing when it conveys a life which responds to God and lives by faith. Such a Church accords with the unexpressed faith within every man that such a community was meant from the beginning.

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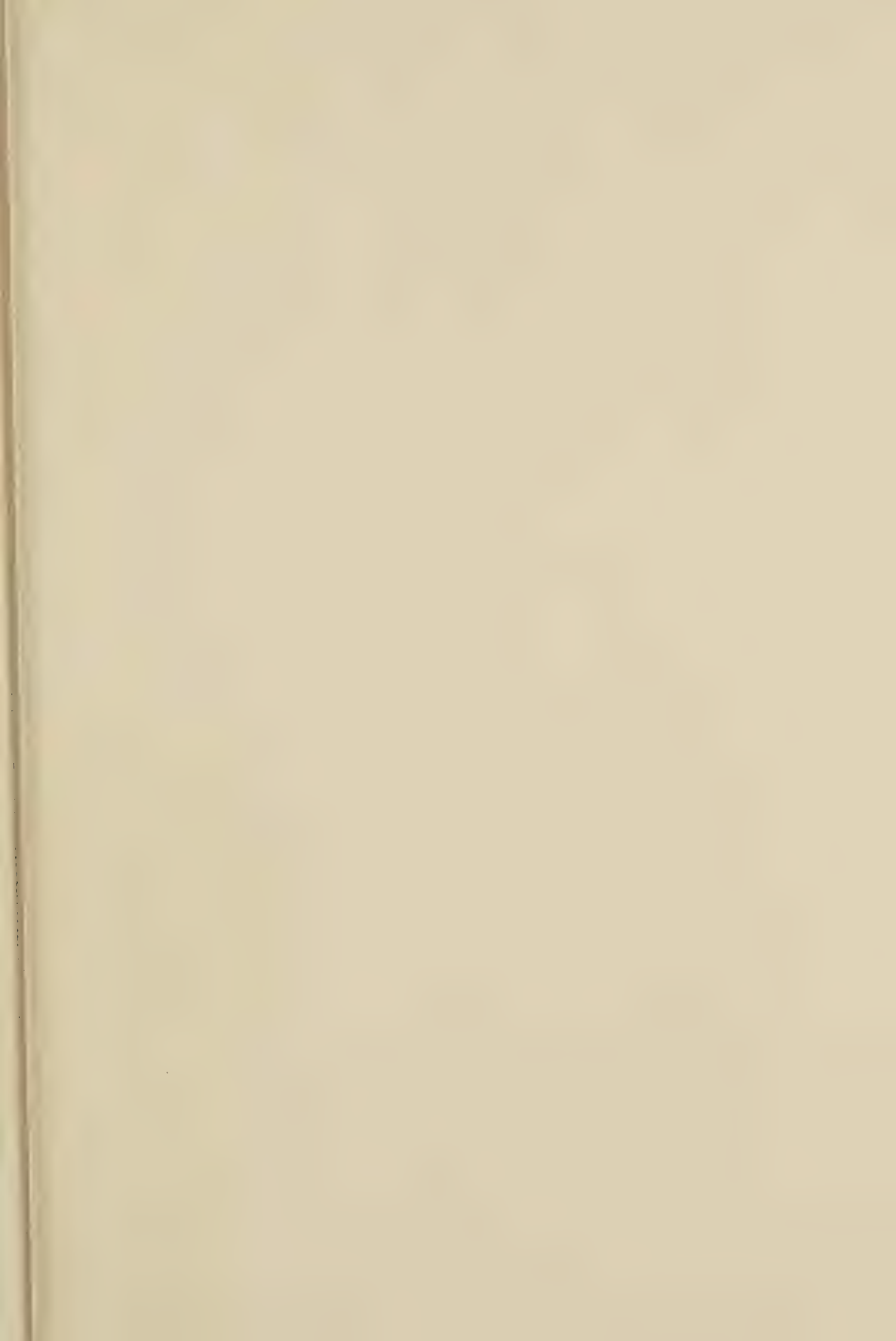
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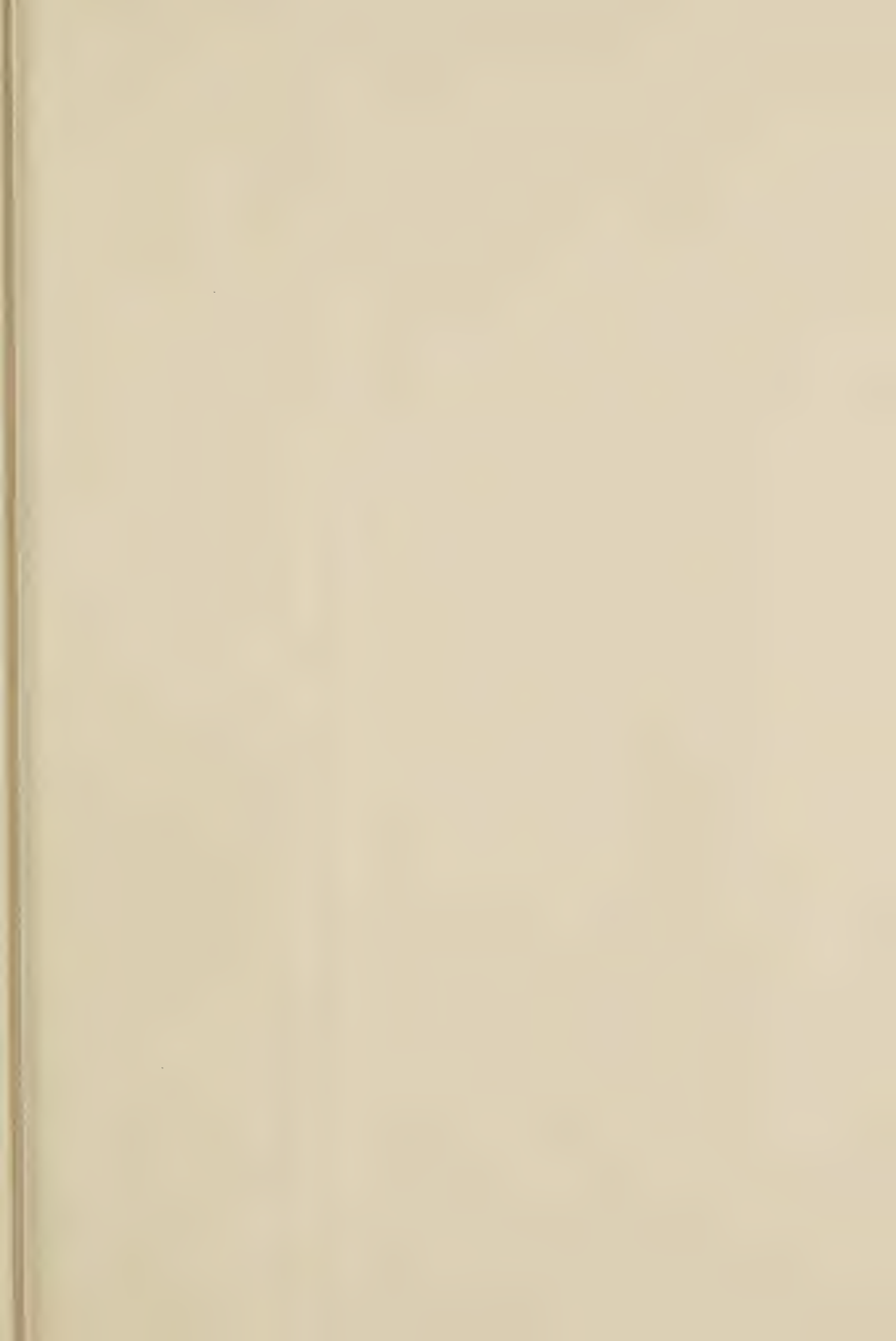
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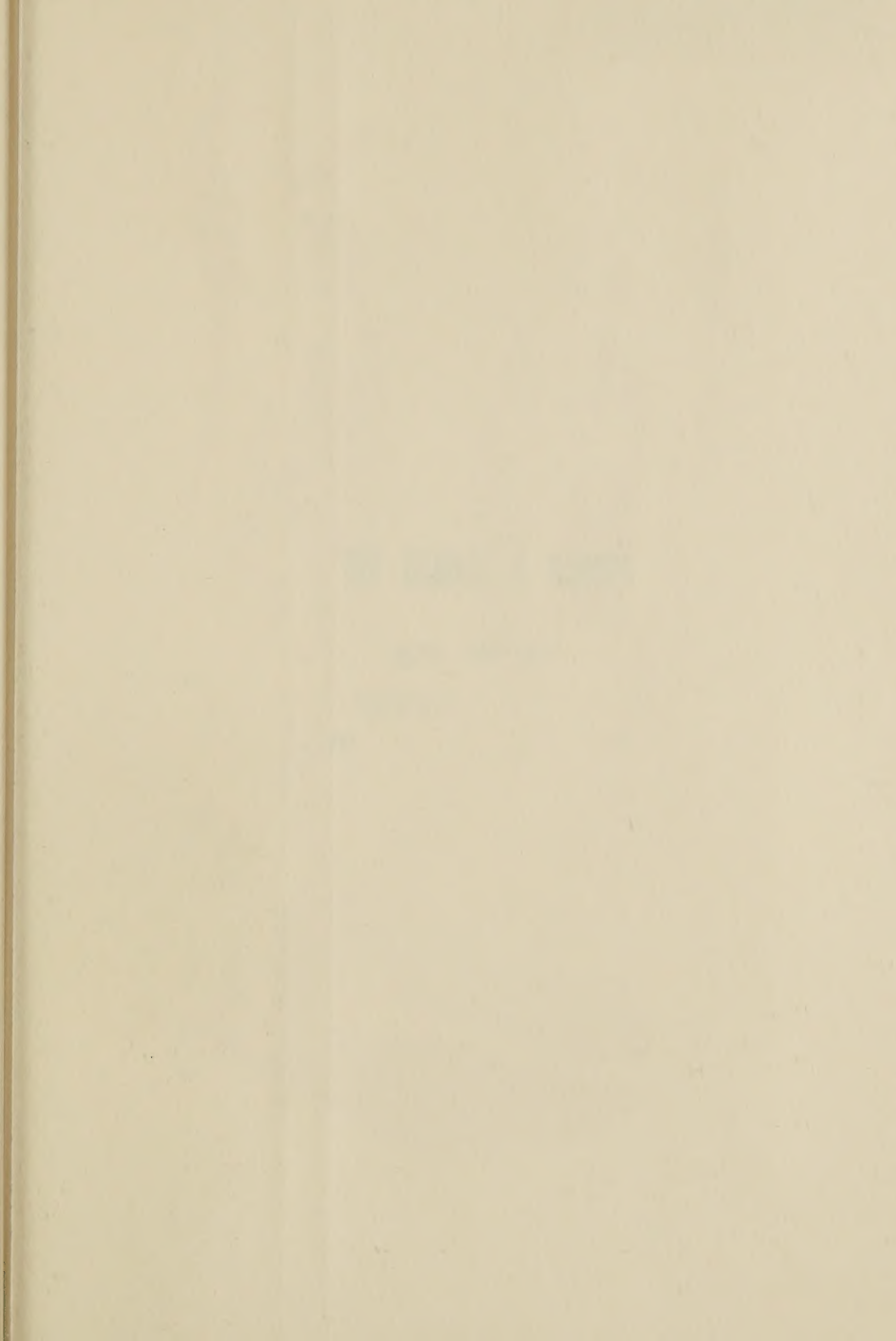
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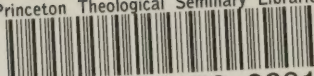
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